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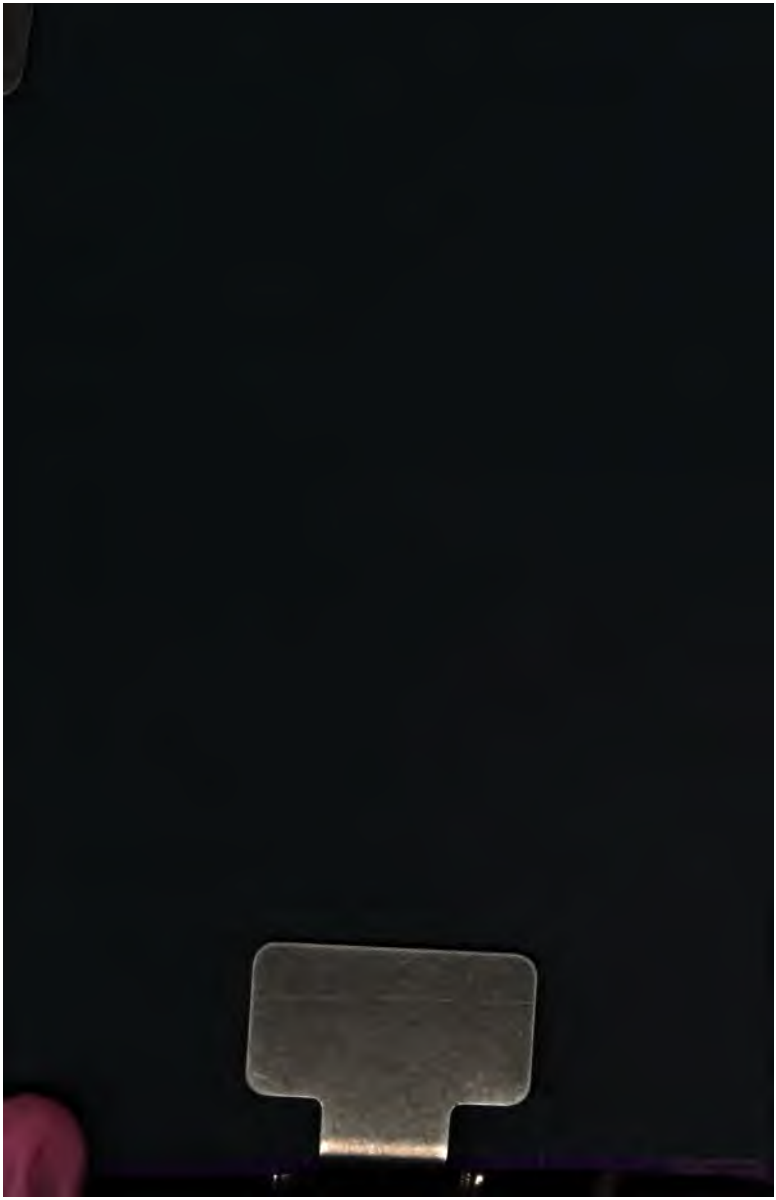
CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE

CAROLINE FRY.



CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE.

CHRIST
OUR EXAMPLE.

BY

CAROLINE FRY,
AUTHOR OF 'THE LISTENER,' 'DAILY READINGS,' ETC.

Ninth Edition,

WITH A PREFACE BY THE
REV. A. M. W. CHRISTOPHER, M.A.
RECTOR OF ST. ALDATE'S, OXFORD.

LONDON:
HATCHARDS, PICCADILLY.
1873.

141. m. 94.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY JOHN STRANGEWAYS,
Castle St. Leicester Sq.

PREFACE.

SOME years ago I was requested to open, at a Clerical and Lay Conference, the discussion of the following question:—*Is the Example of our Lord brought forward in a sufficiently systematic manner by Ministers of the Gospel?* When preparing for this discussion I asked three friends—Dr. Miller, now Vicar of Greenwich, the Rev. C. J. Goodhart, now Rector of Wetherden, and the Rev. S. R. Capel, Rector of Wareham—which they considered to be the best book on the Example of our Lord. Each one of the three, without knowing that the other two had been consulted, named in his reply the book now before the Reader—*Christ our Example*, by the late Caroline Fry.

At the Conference I mentioned this fact, and a clergyman, known for his sound Scriptural writings, rose and said that when he was an undergraduate at Oxford thirty years ago, he had

fallen under the influence of mistaken teachers, but the reading of *Christ our Example* was used of God to deliver him from the erroneous views which he had adopted.

In an address at the last Mildmay Park Conference, on the words 'that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ' (1 Pet. iv. 11), I strongly recommended this book as suited to help, under God's blessing, those who wish to live to the glory of God. A number of copies were in consequence sold, and the Eighth Edition became nearly exhausted. This *Ninth* Edition is published at less than one-third the price of former editions, that the usefulness of the work may be more widely extended. It was needful that I should myself take the risk of publishing this Cheap Edition.

If it be asked, 'What is the special merit of this book over and above other works on the same subject by writers of greater name than the author?' I would reply, that it is written with a very clear understanding of the Gospel of the grace of God, and in entire harmony therewith. It is 'the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth' (Rom. i. 16). It is by means of the Gospel that God brings sinners to receive Jesus as their Saviour, and gives them

in Him power to live to His glory, in conformity with His character and example.

Without believing the Gospel no one will ever follow truly the example of our Lord; for without this, no one can be in vital union with Him, who, as Mediator between God and man, is the Source of all spiritual power to men; as much so now as when He shed forth the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. He said to His disciples, 'I am the Vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing' (John, xv. 5). A consideration of these words will show that the mere exhibition of our Lord's Example, and exhortations to follow it, will have no power to renew the heart and transform the character of one not in union with the Lord Jesus by faith in His blood (Rom. iii. 25; v. 9). It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that a book on the Example of Christ should set forth the Gospel, and be written from beginning to end on Gospel principles. It is because the book before us is so written that I am earnest in encouraging the wider circulation of it; and I will ask all Christians who, after reading it, value it as I do, to aid me in making this book known. And let me ask them to pray that God may

graciously use it, so that many that read it may, through the Spirit, follow Jesus more closely, and, adorning the Doctrine of God our Saviour, become living evidences of Christianity, known and read of all around them. Surely it is specially important that Christians should let their light shine before men in a day when so many will readily read any new and clever book against the Gospel, without studying with candid attention any one work on the evidences of Christianity.

This is a time when we may hope for a great blessing on an effort to fix the thoughts of Christians on the high standard of life for God, which our Lord set before us in His Example. Perhaps never before was there manifested in so large a number of Christian people an equally intense thirst for personal holiness and an equally earnest desire for the heart to show forth, by works of faith and labours of love, the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvellous light. There is also in very many a growing confidence that, if they trust in the Lord Jesus as much for the Holy Spirit to work in them both to will and to do their present duty, as they do trust in Him for having, by the sacrifice of Himself, put away their sins from the

sight of God (Heb. ix. 26), they will be enabled to grow in holiness and in devotion to His service far beyond their present experience.

In the daily endeavour to follow the steps of our Lord's most holy life, it will be well for us to remember that He enabled Peter to walk on the sea just as long as Peter trusted in Him for this power. He did not give His disciple a stock of ability so to walk which would support him after he turned his eye from looking in faith to his Lord, to look at the dangers around him and at himself and at his own weakness. So, if we would live the self-renouncing life St. Paul lived, we must seek grace to walk like the Apostle, *each step* of our way by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us (Gal. ii. 20). Let us pray to the Lord like the Apostles, 'Increase our faith' (Luke, xvii. 5). He will help us according to our faith (Matt. ix. 29); our simple, childlike faith (Mark, x. 15). It is when 'looking unto Jesus' that we shall be enabled to lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us, and to run with patience the race that is set before us (Heb. xii. 1). St. John writes (1 Ep. iii. 3), 'We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.' Even here we shall grow in

moral likeness to Him according as we look in faith to Him. Let us trust Him fully for holiness, of whom the angel said, 'Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins' (Matt. i. 21). He died for our sins to free us from the condemnation due to them. He lives to save us by His grace from the dominion, the practice, the love of sin. He saves His people from the great sin of living for themselves; and by His great love constrains them to live for Him that died for them and rose again (2 Cor. v. 14, 15). He will give to all who trust Him grace sufficient to follow His Example, as those who daily praise Him, because 'He gave Himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works' (Titus, ii. 14).

ALFRED M. W. CHRISTOPHER.

St. Aldate's Rectory, Oxford,
14 *December*, 1872.

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CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

'But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'—2 Cor. iii. 18.

Among those who call themselves Christians, there is a large class with whom some vague estimate of character makes up the whole idea of religion. A good Christian is understood to be one who pays his debts, loves his family, deals honourably with his neighbours, and carries himself amiably and respectably according to his station in society; without any reference to what he believes of the doctrines of Christianity, or whether he believes in Christ at all. The unbelieving poet's axiom is their favourite creed,—

'His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.'

But the creed is falser than the axiom. This is in the

abstract true; for there is no rule of right but the revealed will of God—no example of right but the example of Christ; and he whose life is conformed to these, cannot indeed be wrong. 'This is the will of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent.' To believe in Christ, and follow in his footsteps, we must be born anew and sanctified by the Holy Spirit—and this is to be a Christian indeed. But this is not the poet's meaning, nor the meaning of his unconscious copyists, whether they be avowed Socinians, or of the many who are Socinian in heart without being aware of it. These all, unless they think it bad taste to name the name of Christ, or unless the enmity of the heart to the doctrines of the gospel is so great that they would exclude Christ from their religion altogether, profess to think the example of Jesus the only thing worthy of attention; the morality of the Bible the only thing of importance in it. To conform to these, they fancy themselves fully competent by virtue of some power given by God at their birth; or some grace imparted at baptism; or some act of amnesty, they scarce know what, by which the will is to be taken for the deed, and they who have not done well are to be accepted as having done the best they could. If to persons of this class we speak of faith, they tell us that works are better. If we speak of sin, they say, God is merciful, and their hearts are good. If we set Christ before them, they say it is better to be like him than to talk so much about him. The disciples of Christ, living by faith upon his name, meet with ungentle treatment at their hands; the long repented sins of former days, the deeply mourned defectibility of present conduct, being esteemed sufficient evidence of

hypocrisy. But if there be those, on the other hand, who 'deny the Lord that bought them,' and live without God in the world, they are defended on the ground that, being upright and conscientious men, we have nothing to do with what they *think*. Nay, I have observed that even the word of God meets with but partial acceptance at the hands of these moralists; they like none of it but the gospels, which they idly and falsely conceive to be the practical part of scripture. 'Character, character!'—this is their cry; they will have nothing but character. It seems to them that professors of religion cannot be right, their conduct being so defective. Men of the world cannot be wrong, being so amiable and upright.

Should any such persons cast an eye upon this page, I would bespeak from them a favourable attention. They will not find here a treatise upon faith. I shall not attempt to prove that such opinions virtually set at nought the sacrifice of Christ, make it useless, make it vain; deny the truth of the scriptures, the corruption of man, the nature of sin, and the faithfulness of God in what he has revealed, and sink Christianity to a level with Deism or Mahometanism, which each has a code of morals of its own. The subject of this volume is, *the fruits of faith — the Christian character* — the very test by which *they* have chosen to be tried. We cannot deny it is a scripture test: 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' I bespeak only that the fruit the branches bear shall resemble that which grew upon the stem; that there be no choosing of it by our tastes and habits, or the maxims and conventions of society: that there be no judgment of it but the judgment of God as declared in holy scripture.

I am aware that amongst the number who thus suspend their religious opinions upon some indefinite notions of character, there are persons neither so light nor so careless, though perhaps not less mistaken, than those I have described. These are they who read the Bible with seriousness, who seek truth with a willing and desiring mind, do reverence to their own abstract idea of religion, and think that if they could see it exemplified, they should love it and bow down before it. But because they have formed their *beau idéal* of a Christian from some fancy of their own, rather than from the word of God, they are baffled and puzzled by what they see. In the people of this world they frequently perceive a dignified uprightness, a polished amiability, very strikingly contrasted with the rugged humours and defective conduct of some of the children of God. Could the heart of such be unclosed, and the springs and motives of action be brought to the test of scripture, there would be little difficulty, I believe, in deciding which of them approaches nearest to our great Example. But the exterior only is perceived, and this is measured by 'the measure of a man,' and not of God; and the honest inquirer after Christian character, still persuading himself he shall love it when he finds it, either takes that for it which is not it, and does homage to a counterfeit; or, failing to recognise the reality, when he finds it, learns to doubt if it has existence anywhere. I shall be very glad if I can show to any such that they mistake the character they are in search of; that they have not examined the Divine Original with sufficient minuteness to know the traces of his image when they see them. Some part of the difficulty

'opposes their acceptance of a profession so little

borne out by the character of the professors, may perhaps be removed if I can convince them that, however beautiful appears the character of the upright and amiable of this world, it bears not the slightest resemblance to the character of Him, to be conformed to whose likeness we were redeemed, while in the rude, the indistinct, the unformed lines sketched in the bosom of the weakest believer, there are some traces of what will be a likeness, though as yet indistinct and unattractive.

In opposition to the virtual Socinianism I have described, the evangelical church has extensively maintained the incapacity of man, in his natural state, to do anything good in the sight of God; the condemnation under which he lies to everlasting misery, the necessity of an entire change of heart, a new principle, a new nature, before he can begin the Christian course; also that this change does not take place by formal admission into the external church, but by the direct influence of the Holy Spirit given by God, according to the good pleasure of his will, of his free mercy, and for Christ's sake,—repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ being the first evidences of this vital change of the heart, this new existence. Conversion has consequently become the prominent object in the teaching of the gospel, the theme of the preacher's exhortation, and the believer's hope. 'Repent and be converted' is the universal command. 'You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins' is the precious assurance, the earnest of all future good. This conversion, this change of heart, this new birth, has been compared in scripture to many things which, in its completeness, and sometimes in its suddenness, it resem-

bles. It is the giving of eyesight to the blind, without which he cannot begin to see. It is the bringing of the dead to life, without which he cannot begin to exercise the functions of life. It is the release of a slave from bondage, without which he cannot enter the service of another master. Such are the figures used in scripture for the conversion, the spiritual regeneration of the soul —all implying commencement, a beginning, on which everything else is consequent. While the heart is unchanged and the spirit unrenewed, vain is every exhortation to serve God and lead a good and Christian life. This is to demand the fruit before the tree is planted, to reap the harvest before the field is sown. It is not the language of scripture. 'Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,' be conscious of your need of such a change, and believe that it is the gift and purchase of redeeming love. This is the first exhortation addressed to every sinner under the gospel dispensation; and as sinners, once dead in trespasses and sins, this is the theme of our prayers, our gratitude, and our rejoicing. For we believe on the word and faithfulness of God, that the work he has begun he will complete; and having by his Spirit touched us into life, he will preserve the feeble breath within us till it grows into immortality. So long as the assurance of this first act of mercy abides within us, we feel, amid all the sins and dangers that surround us, no apprehension for the issue of our travail. Converted to Christ, changed from our natural enmity to love, we believe that we are saved. Being justified freely, we have confidence towards God; and God is more honoured by our confidence than he could be by our doubts, or any degree of mistrustful, anxious labour with which we

might endeavour to relieve them. This is the foundation of Christian character, the living principle, without which the action of life cannot be carried on; and proportioned, I believe, to the vigour of this principle will be the action it produces.

But on this good foundation we perceive a disposition now abroad to build a structure totally at variance with the symmetry and beauty of the divine plan of salvation — a structure so awkward and ill-proportioned as at once to prove itself the fabrication of human weakness, which, driven from error on the one side, inclines immediately to error on the other. Dwelling continually on the divine doctrines above mentioned, men have come to consider pardon and safety, and the hope, not very animated, of a future heaven, as the whole of salvation—all of it, at least, that is dispensed to us in this life — holiness and happiness, the blessed remainder, being to be waited for till we die. To the scriptural doctrine of imputed righteousness, by which we stand justified and sinless in the sight of God, has been joined, and in a manner confounded with it, an idea of imputed sanctification, by which, without any change wrought in us, we become holy and prepared for bliss at the same moment that we are pardoned and justified in Christ — nothing more being to be done by us, or in us, until the day of our removal hence; thus denying altogether the idea of progressive sanctification, or any sanctification at all, except as imputed to us from the perfect merits of our blessed Lord. If any of my readers who have examined these doctrines by the light of scripture seriously believe them, there are not wanting more powerful writers than I should be, whose arguments,

doubtless, they have weighed. Controversy is not my design; but I know that for one person who has received this notion as an examined tenet of their faith there are many with whom it is the unexamined and unsuspected error of carelessness rather than of conviction. These would I persuade, if possible, to consider their opinions. For I have observed the consequences of this base contentedness with an unhallowed and unhappy safety; the half of what Christ has promised, and that not the better half, since, if his mercy rested there, it would be unavailing to us; it would have remitted our misery without making us blessed; it would have sent us from prison with our fetters on, and preferred us to a heaven that would not suit us when we came there: the little taste for that heaven evinced by persons in this condition is a proof that it would not. From this low estimate of what salvation is I have observed to result a life and conversation proportionately low, very little of enjoyment, a stupid expectation that scarcely ever warms into desire. Heaven's banquet is vainly spread before an appetite that longs not for it, because it has never tasted of its sweetness; there is no desire for the Bridegroom's coming, because there is no assimilation of character to make the blest companionship delightful. Christians know not themselves the cause of this unreadiness, though they are conscious of feeling it. They say that the love of life is natural, or that they cannot presume to be in haste, while perhaps they are not fit. But if, on this, you advise them to become more fit, by a closer walk with God, they recur to first principles—their fitness is of God; he has promised; justified in Christ, they know that they are saved. Most precious truths!

—enough, one would think, to make us long after him as the hart panteth for the water-brooks, and lose all care for what may intervene in watchful expectation of his coming. But they have no such effect in this case: time loses little of its importance, earth but little of its influence. This is betrayed by a mode of talking which I think is not so good as it is common to good people —a sort of acquiescent self-reproach, which reconciles the mind to the shame it confesses and the falseness it laments, as if sin had lost its culpability and become a mere misfortune. I hear Christians express themselves after this manner: 'We all forget God in the business of life, we prefer our own will to his, we fear man more than God, we covet too ardently this world's good,' and so on, as if there were no closer walk with God, no nearer resemblance to his image, than they have attained. And sometimes I have observed they are not pleased to be contradicted; they do not like to be told that *all* do not forget God, or prefer their own will to his, or care for the things of earth, to the degree in which they are content to do so—in short, that there is a higher and a holier walk, not only attainable, but which it is our indispensable duty to attain. If those to whom we so speak are high and self-confident spirits, they dislike and ridicule the holy pretensions; if they are meek and timid, they feel it a reproach, and are discouraged by the doubt it seems to throw on the reality of their principles; for I am not speaking now of persons who, having not the principle, excuse sin because they love it, but of some who have truly found the Pearl of price, and would not, with all their faltering, part from it to save the life they love too much, or buy the world they too much care for; but, from mis-

apprehension of its use and beauty, they have laid it for safety in the casket when they should have hung it about their neck — the pride, the ornament, the joy of their existence.

When man fell from his state of innocence in Eden, we know not the extent of his forfeiture, we know not to what condition he would have attained, had he continued in obedience; nor do we know what measure or what manner of bliss he parted from when he went out of paradise: but we are told he was created in the image, and lived in the favour of God; and when he sinned, he lost that image and he lost that favour. The death of Christ having repaired the injury that sin has done, and removed from his people all the curse and all the consequences of the fall, has placed them in a condition not worse, but better, than that in which Adam was created. For this, it is not enough that they be restored to the favour of God, pardoned, reconciled, received again, they must be restored to his image also; else is their sentence not reversed, their ruin not retrieved. Is it not true, then, that they who rest satisfied with a bare and barren hope of being safe for Eternity, by which little more is understood than safety from the punishment of hell, do meanly estimate the Redeemer's work, accept but the half of what he has purchased, and wearily and unsafely postpone the other half, as something beyond our present reach? True, it is beyond our present reach, in its ultimate perfection; holiness and happiness unalloyed are not the inhabitants of a still sinful bosom in a corrupted world. The sinless perfection of the divine Original cannot be copied entire till the spirit has put off mortality. So are the depths of science beyond the reach of the young intellect

in its first attempts to reach them. So are the treasures of the earth beyond the reach of the miner when he begins to bore the surface. But is that a reason they should not begin? Would they ever reach their end, if they waited till it were at once within their grasp? Is it not rather true, that the sooner they begin and the more hopefully they labour, the sooner the one will be learned and the other rich, and both be gratified with the possession that seemed at first so distant and impossible? Thus is it with the Redeemer's work; holiness and happiness — to be with him and to be like him — that blessed consummation of our desires is indeed beyond the grasp of sinful, suffering humanity. Hope itself cannot compass it, for it knows not what it is: We know not what we shall be. 'But we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him.' From the moment that the favour of God is restored to us by the imparting of the Holy Spirit, we are wakened to a new existence and a better principle. It becomes his task, it becomes ours, to retrace in our bosom his obliterated image; to remould us into his likeness; to begin the change which can be perfected only in eternity. And let us not suppose it does not signify how fast or how slowly this change proceeds, so that it be accomplished in the end. Does it not signify that we forego for years on years the measure of happiness within our reach? that we withhold from God the measure of glory which should be reflected from our bosoms? Should we make so light of the Saviour's gift as to be in no haste to enjoy it till we possess it all, if indeed we can possess in eternity what we have made no progress towards in time? Those who think so must take all the risk of the adventure; I see no security for them in

the word of God; I see there, on the contrary, that growth, increase, progression, are the terms in which the divine life is spoken of; 'increasing in stature,' 'growing into the likeness,' 'going on to perfection.' Such figures and expressions do not characterise that sudden change at death which some rely on. The first sowing of the seed is a momentary act; the putting in of the sickle is momentary also: but it grows not in an hour, it ripens not in a day. Does the husbandman, when he comes into his field to reap, expect to find it as he left it when he sowed? Or when suns have shone on it in vain, and in vain the waters of heaven descended, will it start into perfection under the reaper's sickle? These are scripture figures, therefore I need not fear that I speak unadvisedly. And when I look around upon those whom we believe, from an apparent change in their principles, to be the children of God, and see some advancing rapidly in the way of holiness, becoming more and more like their Lord, and more conformed in all things to the Father's will, while others seem to rest where they began; still conning their first principles; wishing and hoping, but nothing the happier, nothing the holier for their hopes; when I consider this, and together with it those parables in which our Lord spake of an unequal distribution of rewards, by some measurement of previous service, I cannot divest myself of the thought, that the place of each one in the Redeemer's kingdom may depend upon the progress he has made in life; I do not mean upon his works which he has done—that is impossible, 'for we are all unprofitable servants,' and can earn no preference; but upon his character—what he is—his fitness to be employed in the higher offices of the kingdom, and to sit

nearest to the King. I do not pretend to know by what rule these unequal honours will be distributed; 'there are last that shall be first, and first that shall be last;' but it seems certain that those will sit nearest to their Lord who shall be found most like him.

Then if it be true that upon our progress in holiness depends possibly our place in the Redeemer's kingdom, certainly our happiness here, and the glory of God in us, the subject of this volume cannot be unimportant to the believer. The time is short—how short God only knows—but short certainly: our sun perhaps is already on the horizon; or before it has reached the noon, some untimely blighting has chilled our frame, and left but little vigour for the task, which in our days of capability we have done so idly; or if it is not so as yet, it would be unwise to wait till it shall be;—there are mornings of life which never have an evening. Shall we be content, when Jesus comes, to take the lowest and the farthest seat, while some who in knowledge and profession seem below us now, 'are bidden to go up higher?' This is, indeed, to want ambition such as saints may feel. But 'already is the kingdom of God within us:' the days are lost that we delay to claim its freedom and to share its bliss. That heaven we anticipate, is but the perfecting of a bliss begun; every step we advance in holiness brings us nearer to the enjoyment of it. If we have not tasted it, it is because we have not reached after it. We have gazed so long upon our own deformity, we have forgotten the beauty we are required to transcribe into our bosoms. We have become so low, so indolent, under the sense of our own weakness, we have forgotten that in Jesus we have strength for everything.

How, then, is man to find out God? Where are we to see, that we may copy it, the likeness in which we were created, and to which we are redeemed? In the abstract idea of God there is nothing that humanity can compass. His creative power, his all-disposing wisdom, his undeserved bounty, and resistless vengeance—these are all we know of God, and these we cannot imitate, for they are the attributes of Deity. But as God has manifested himself to us in the humanity of Jesus Christ, we have a perfect pattern, by which we may fully know what he would have us to be. In proportion as we resemble this, we are holy in his sight; and in proportion as we are holy, we are happy. If it be but some faint, imperfect feature that we catch graven by his Spirit on the heart, it will be great gain on our abundant wretchedness. But he has promised more, he has commanded more; and though of ourselves we can do nothing, we are to act as if we could do all. When the artist puts the pencil into the pupil's hand, and bids him copy what he sees, he knows he cannot do it, but he means to teach him. So when our heavenly Father places himself in characters of humanity before us, and bids us 'be holy as he is holy, and pure as he is pure,' he knows we cannot, but he intends to lead us forward, by almost unconscious steps, to the attainment of that which he requires. He sets before us the object of imitation that, with eye intently fixed upon its beauty, we may love it more the longer we behold it, and grow insensibly to the likeness of what we love—still longing, still proceeding, but then only 'satisfied, when we awake after his likeness.'

CHAPTER II.

IN THE OBJECT OF LIFE.

'For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.'—John, vi. 38.

No reasonable being acts without a motive. The veriest animal capable of choosing, is determined in his choice by something. It cannot be that man should live without an object to which his actions tend, in which his purposes terminate, which determines his path, and impels him forward in it. Without this momentum communicated from without, the rational, deliberative spirit could no more choose a course and follow it, than the dead masses of the material universe could find themselves an orbit and maintain their motion in it, without the restraining force of gravitation. These inert bodies move as they are driven, and if some counterinfluence supervene, they cannot choose but leave their course and follow it. Man has a power of resistance, which these have not. He may choose, so to speak, the centre of his sphere: he may shun the influences which would withdraw him from it. He may strengthen by indulgence, or weaken by resistance, the motives that induce him to act, and determine his modes of acting. He may, by the deliberative will with which he is endowed, choose among the objects that are set before him which he will pursue, for what he will

live, to what he will direct his aims. I know this may be disputed, and may even be metaphysically disproved. It may be said, that man cannot choose in opposition to his nature, the will itself being under the influence of his passions, tastes, and feelings. He cannot choose a good object while a bad one seems more desirable to him ; he cannot prefer that which he does not love to that which possesses his affections ; he cannot by mere volition desire what he would not have, nor please himself with that which affords him no delight. This is true, and in this consists the moral inability of man, born in sin, and of his own nature loving it, to make a right choice between the good and evil that are set before him, to renounce the world he loves, and turn himself to the God he loves not. To do this would prove him wise, whereas he is by nature foolish: to do this would evince a correct judgment, whereas he is blind and perverted: to do this would be to do the greatest good, whereas he is pronounced incapable of any good. This is scripturally and philosophically good; and our nature must be changed, and our judgment must be enlightened, and the feelings and affections of our hearts reversed, before man will make God his choice.

It is impossible to reflect closely, and not be sensible of the difficulty into which this position brings us —a difficulty from which human reason, as I think, is totally unable to extricate us. This moral incapacity, so plainly declared in Scripture, and deducible from the very nature of things, if our condition be such as the Scripture says it is, seems, by every process of reasoning to which it can be subjected, to disprove our moral responsibility — so much of it, at least, as is involved in that bad preference, by which we remain separated from

God, when means of reconciliation are proposed to us. It is argued, that if a man cannot prefer that good which is uncongenial with his evil nature, and cannot of his own power change that nature, and leave the ways of death for the paths of everlasting life, why is he called upon to do so — why is he reproached for his resistance, and finally condemned for his refusal? At this issue human reasoning must arrive, and human wisdom has nothing to reply. St. Paul himself, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, had nothing to reply. When he had brought his argument to this point, he could only say, 'Nay, but O man! who art thou that repliest against God?' Much disputation would be spared, if men would cease the argument where St. Paul declined it — if they were not ashamed to own they do not understand what the Spirit, speaking by the mouth of St. Paul, forbore to explain. It would be well if we did not defer to do that which is required of us, namely, to believe what the word of God declares, till we can do that which is not required of us, namely, to reconcile its apparent inconsistencies. But against this submissiveness the pride of intellect revolts. Unable to reconcile the sovereignty of divine grace with the responsibility of man, they who see the former too plainly to reject it, by a very consistent strain of reasoning make that which is not written the necessary sequence of that which is written. In doing so, they make void the half of Scripture; that most abundant part of it which addresses man on his wilful rejection of the gospel; and because they find it plainly written that 'no man can come to Christ, except the Father draw him,' they deprive of all meaning his tender remonstrance, 'Ye

will not come to me that ye might have life.' Those, on the contrary, who cannot believe that the invitations of the gospel are a mockery — that those commands, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light;'* and those entreaties, 'Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?'† and those reproaches, 'Because I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;'‡ have no more meaning, as addressed to a man dead in trespasses and sins, than if directed to the cold carcass in the churchyard, reject the converse position, and maintain that man has some power of himself to help himself, as if it were not as plainly written, that 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,'§ 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.'‖ At one or other of these conclusions I believe we must arrive, by every train of consistent argument. But why should man argue when God has spoken? why should finite reason, darkened by the fall, wonder at its own incapacity to comprehend what God has said? He has declared both these things; and difficult as they are to reconcile in the abstract, they have never presented any practical difficulty to an honest mind. Every unsilenced conscience testifies of their truth; every man born anew of the Spirit, who has turned from vanities to serve the living God, knows that he did not do it, and could not have done it, for himself; and every man that continues in sin, in defiance of the threats and promises of the gospel, knows that he does it wilfully and of his own un-

* Eph. v. 14. † Ezek. xxxiii. 11. ‡ Prov. i. 24.
§ Rom. ix. 16. ‖ John, xv. 16.

godly preference; and both these truths will be testified to in heaven and hell to all eternity—in one, to the glory of God, and to the gratitude of the freely saved; in the other to the endless misery of the self-destroyed.

Man, then, is incapable as a rational being of living without an object; and he is responsible as a moral being for choosing well among the many objects that are set before him. But what do men live for? Some seem to live for nothing but to sin, and to accumulate upon themselves the debt of almighty vengeance, as if life were not long enough, without unnatural efforts, to earn eternal misery. They long for the morning to renew their work—they go abroad to find out where iniquity is doing—they return to pursue it in their secret chambers—they lie down at night full of contrivings how to sin to-morrow. Miserable slaves! they have indeed chosen an object, and, hardened as they are, they dare not accuse their Maker of their choice. If they cannot help it now, they remember when they could; they are less deceived than many—they know their present wretchedness, and often, I believe, anticipate the issue. But all are not alike: there are men of this world very different from these, and yet I see not that they are any more like Christ. There are those whose only object in existence seems to be to do no harm. Entrusted all with some talents, most of them with many, they feel no responsibility but to keep them safe and innoxious; they preserve their health by temperance, their property by prudence, and their character by propriety of conduct, and no man lays anything to their charge. Harmlessness makes them objects of the world's indulgence: not of its affection, for they do nothing to obtain it. They are not

known to despise God's laws, neither are they seen to give him honour. They are not heard to deny Christ, nor to confess him before men. What shall it be said these live for, with their harmless pleasures and their selfish pains? It might be for society; but then they lose their purpose—the world itself gains nothing by them, and would not miss them if they ceased to live. All they pretend to is to do no harm. What an object for an immortal soul to choose! and yet they make some boast of it. Was it for such a purpose God the Father created and endowed them? Do such pretend to any likeness to the Son of God? There is a portrait that resembles them now: 'Wherein have we robbed thee?'* &c.; and when that day, the day of the manifestation of the sons of God, shall come, they will be found in the likeness of him who said to his lord, 'There thou hast that is thine.'

Need I name those whose only object in the world is to possess it? If they are not many, they are enough for plain sense to wonder at. These are they who join house to house, and field to field, but neither dwell in their houses, nor reap the harvest of their fields; the whole object of their existence being to accumulate wealth and honours, for years they do not live to see, and children that die before them. These have a likeness, too, sketched by the pencil of Him, whom, I suppose, they do not pretend to resemble—'Thou fool, this night!' And there are those, whose only object in existence is to enjoy it; and they are the greater part of those who dwell upon the earth. For it matters not what their enjoyments are—they

* Mal. iii. 8.

may be vicious, or they may be only vain, or they may be very rational; they may be sometimes in opposition to the will of God, and sometimes in conformity with it; the object is the same, since there is no settled purpose to observe it or to slight it, and they are determined either by taste or habit, rather than by principle. While one seeks enjoyment in what is distinctively called pleasure, the 'lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;' another finds it in the legitimate comforts of domestic life, and a third in intellectual exercise and the pursuits of science. I do not say there is no difference in the wisdom of their choice. The world has its wise ones as well as its foolish, though with God one term describes them: 'For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.' My argument is, that their object is the same, since it is no other than to enjoy life after their own manner. If they work, it is that they may enjoy the fruit of their labours: if they study, it is that they may enjoy the benefits of knowledge; if they mix with others, it is to enjoy society; if they live apart, it is to enjoy themselves. In few words, be their path of existence what it may, their object in it is to enjoy the most that circumstances will permit. It were a mockery to ask, if He who came into the world to suffer, lived for a purpose such as this?

I will suppose but one case more. I will suppose there may be those whose only object in existence is to do good, to benefit society, to gratify their friends, to bless their families: who cast into the treasury all that Providence has given them. Let them have their likeness in him of old who thus describes himself: 'When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the

eye saw me, it gave witness to me. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.' * And if there are none over whom this philanthropy reigns entire, the single object that directs their course, we know there are many over whom it exercises a predominant influence, who live more for others than themselves. They cannot be dissatisfied with the portrait! Let them compare it with the likeness of their Lord.

I have drawn these characters distinct, but they are not really so. Most people are pursuing more than one of the above-named objects — some are influenced by all of them: I speak, therefore, of the bearings of the human mind generally, rather than of individuals. Each one, by analysing his own mingled motives, may perceive which are, and which are not, in unison with those of the Lord Jesus Christ. And let it not be thought that I condemn as vicious, or reject as forbidden, every object which I show to be no part of his. This is beside the purpose; we are examining our progress towards assimilation with our Lord. Our object may be very good, but if it was not Christ's object, it can form no feature of resemblance. So far as it is good, it will stand among the many things which have 'their reward.' They who labour honestly to possess, will have honest possession for their reward, and it is much; they who seek knowledge, will have the benefits of knowledge for their reward, and they are many; they who live for this world's love, will have its love, the sweetest zest of time's transitory banquet; and they who live for its

* Job, xxix. 11, 13.

pleasures only, must take the value of them for their recompense. Christ wanted none of them, and he pursued them not. If we pursue them, as in subordination to higher aims we may, it must be for their own sake; they cannot assimilate us to his character, nor bring us to share in his reward. Let us have discarded from our bosom every sinful object; let us find there none of the baser kind of selfish ones; let our ends be honourable, generous, and good; and if there be no object in our life besides, I say of the portrait, it may be very beautiful—it is very beautiful to human vision, but it is not like Christ.

In his human existence Christ had a single object. If there were any subordinate ones, I do not perceive that they acted upon him independently of this. When he assumed humanity, his own will and his Father's being one, it was his divine purpose to redeem the sons of men, instigated by his own eternal love and pity. But he does not give this as a reason for his coming. 'I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me.'* Through all his life we find the highest motives that could have acted upon his humanity, in like manner superseded and displaced. The mind of Jesus Christ was capable of being actuated by whatever motives naturally and sinlessly act upon our own; but I do not perceive any instance in which he followed so natural an impulse. The aims of ambition, the ends of avarice, the contrivances of pride, and the schemings of sinful passions, were excluded of course; but neither does it appear in scripture, that he was ever determined in what he did

* John, vi. 38.

by the legitimate desires of humanity. Had there been any motive in his hallowed bosom of sufficient power to move him to action without reference to his Father's will, it must have been his benevolence, his tender pity for the children of men, the advancement of the gracious work of their salvation. Yet Jesus lived for thirty years inactive, unheard of, working probably for his daily bread. Did not compassion move him all that time? Did he not feel the divinity within him, and know his power to save? Doubtless his tender bosom throbbed through all those years to warn the perishing sinner of his doom, and open the gates of mercy. Doubtless his compassionate eye looked on the sick and bereaved with as much pity then as when he worked miracles to relieve them. But for thirty years — so we have reason to believe — Jesus preached no gospel, offered no mercy, healed no diseases; and why this loss of time and opportunity while men were perishing around him? Because he did not feel, or was not willing? No; but because his 'hour was not yet come' — the hour appointed of his Father. Jesus did not live to gratify his benevolence; he did not act upon the impulse of mere humanity: he did not speak by the dictation of his own best feelings: he lived, acted, and spoke for the accomplishment of his Father's will, and therefore waited his appointed time. And when the time was come, and he commenced his spiritual mission as a preacher of righteousness, it does not appear that he ever consulted his own pleasure in calling a sinner from the error of his ways. Or why, when he could draw Simon from his honest labours, and Matthew from his nefarious gains, and the Magdalen from her unlawful courses, did he let the young man,

whom when he saw he loved, go away sorrowful and unreclaimed? We can understand no otherwise, than that Jesus knew, for that time at least, it was not his Father's will that he should put forth his divine energies, to draw the rich man from his wealth. Jesus was subject to his parents, and obeyed them: but in this most common duty there was something beyond the motives by which the families of men are bound together; beyond affection, duty, or necessity; for when the moment came that the will of his heavenly Father assigned him business elsewhere, he left his parents to seek him sorrowing, subjecting them to uneasiness on his account. Jesus had an animal existence to support — he ate, drank, slept, as other men; such was the will of God: but these necessities too were foregone, when the will of God required. He said, when he had fasted long, that 'his meat and drink,' that which superseded all natural desires, was to do his Father's will.* And when it was his Father's will that he should suffer hunger, he refused the opportune persuasion of the tempter to work a miracle for his own relief. In his social kindness, in the temporal favours he conferred, I do not see that the desire — I will not say of glory and distinction, that were impossible — but the desire of human affection, of human gratitude, the natural heart's best feelings, was ever the motive of his actions. If Jesus had sought human approbation, or spoken or kept silence to conciliate the hearts of men, and deprecate their animosity, he needed not to have lived among them a wonder and an abhorrence, whilst he had all power to confer bene-

* John, iv. 34.

fits and purchase favour. Evil he never did to any man; but even good he did not indiscriminately, and for his own holy delight therein, but simply when and because it was the Father's will.

In his death was it not the same? Mysterious as it is, there was a moment when the will of the man Christ Jesus and the will of the Father were not one. His human nature shrank from the task his Godhead had assumed; and, having put to his lips that cup of bitterness he had voluntarily filled, he would at one moment have put it from him, and desired, prayed, that he might not drink it. What motive enabled him to grasp that cup more firmly in his hand, and drink it to the dregs? 'Yet not my will, but thine be done.' In life, in death, it was the same. That the scripture, God's revealed will, might be fulfilled, he kept silence before his accusers, and answered not a word. That the scripture might be fulfilled, he complained of thirst upon the cross, and tasted of the vinegar and gall. Endowed with all power over men and devils, over the elements of nature and the regions of heaven—power to keep his life, and to lay it down, and take it up again,—he never exercised his power but to fulfil the scriptures and do his Father's will. For this he spake, for this he kept silence, for this he went into the city, for this he withdrew into the wilderness; for this he hid himself from death, while his hour was not yet come; for this he exposed himself to it at the appointed time. Had Jesus not a single, undivided object?

I see no likeness of this in those advocates of a cold morality, who will hear nothing of Christ but his example. What have they lived for from their birth? what do they live for now? whose will do they consider

in the morning, and accomplish till night-fall? and in which of all their good deeds and their useful ones has the will of God been the predominant object? They have lain down to rest, and risen up to play; they have laboured to gain, and spent to enjoy, not as secondary objects to the great one first fulfilled. It has been the purpose and character of their existence to get the best, and enjoy the most, and abide the longest, irrespective of any wish to fulfil, in doing so, the purposes of God. And I see no likeness to it in the upright man, pursuing his earthly business, but not because God has ordained it; conferring benefits on society, but not because God has required it; abstaining from profligacy, but not because God has forbidden it; moved by a thousand objects, not evil in themselves, but never by the only one which moved our Lord. There are undertakings, even of piety and benevolence, in which, from the spirit in which they are carried on and the feelings that attend their issue, it is evident that compassion, or natural benevolence, have at least precedence of any desire to do the will of God. And there is often in the mind a general desire that the will of God be done, when he might watch in vain for a single demonstration that we live, act, speak, enjoy, or suffer with the simple design of doing it.

These branches of the wild olive-tree bear fruits, wholesome fruits, that have their value here; but they are not those which grew upon the stem of which the child of God is an ingrafted branch. Are such found anywhere? I believe they are, and I think they might be more, if they were more assiduously cultivated. That man, unchanged and unregenerate, should make the will of God the object of existence, is plainly impos-

sible. God himself cannot enable him to do this, without first converting his affections and his will. He and his Maker are not of a mind in anything; therefore to seek the will of God would be to defeat his own purposes, to forego his enjoyments, and live in daily opposition to all he considers good. We can but entreat such an one to contrast his own motives and objects with those of the Divine Being whose example he acknowledges. He must be converted, pardoned, born again of the Spirit, before we can exhort him to go on to perfection. He must receive the seed into his fallow before we can invite him to bring forth the fruit and reap the promised harvest. But with the child of God the case is otherwise. The renewed will is brought into unison with his Maker's. He loves what God loves, approves what God approves, consents to his law that it is good, to his ways that they are wise, to his purposes that they are beneficent. From his heart he desires that God's will be done: here there seems no impediment. Why should it be so difficult to live for that which we desire? why impossible to make that the object of our actions which is already the object of our hopes and wishes?

I believe that a degree of conformity in this particular to the character of Christ does take place in the bosom of every true Christian; and while his outward actions appear to the world the same, the object of them is changed, to his own consciousness. St. Paul speaks of himself as having attained a large measure of this conformity, doubtless because he walked in the recent footsteps of his Lord, his example immediately before him. In the minutest, most earthly, most necessary acts, St. Paul declares he had but this one object. If

he ate, it was to the Lord; if he ate not, to the Lord he ate not: meaning, as I understand, that his intention in either was to subserve the purposes of God. In every case he pleads this intention as the ground and justification of his conduct, and pleads it so confidently as to show he had no distrust of himself in this particular. I believe this desire to do the will of God is the first-formed fruit of the divine life in the soul, though it may be the last to ripen to perfection. We shall do well to look for it within us. If it is not there at all, we have little reason to be satisfied with our condition: the root that is not planted cannot grow. If we find it, but as a grain of mustard-seed, mixed with a thousand other objects, we may look with encouragement for its increase; but I think we must not rest satisfied till it takes precedence of every other object, however useful and legitimate, being destined ultimately to absorb them all. To every one of us naturally the main object is to enjoy life, to preserve it, to provide for it, in some cases to endure it. The subordinate purposes through which this main one is pursued are to please ourselves, to please others, to get, and perhaps to cause—for we will take nature at its best—as little evil and as much good as possible, irrespective of any intention to do the will of God. As soon as the divine life is begun in the soul by the renewing of the Holy Spirit, a new object of existence is perceived to take its turn and mingle with these earthly ones—subordinate, perhaps, at first; honest, but not supreme, as it should be, and is to be hereafter. Take an instance. Let it be the parent going forth to his accustomed occupation, to which the greatest part of his time is devoted. If he be a mere worldly man, his object is to increase his

means or provide for his family. When his heart is in some measure with God, he considers, together with this natural desire, that he is fulfilling the appointment of Providence, which requires every man to provide for his own, and do diligently the duties of his calling. But if he have indeed the mind of Christ, the will of God being his predominant object, however the outward action may be the same, the inward emotion will be very different—so different, they need not be mistaken by himself, and cannot be by Him who reads the heart; for then the labour will be willing, be it honourable or be it mean; the gains will be enough, be they anything or nothing; ambition will not urge it, nor pride refuse it, nor earthliness be disappointed in the issue. He gains, at any rate, his object; he does the will of God, and the will of God determines the event. With higher objects and more generous aims, our benevolent and spiritual labours are capable of the same distinction, whether they be done for man or God, to accomplish our will or his. Sometimes we complain that we work in vain, or teach in vain, and have no success in our charitable labours; yet if we began to work with the simple intention to subserve the will of God, we must attain our object, be the issue what it may. Thus every action of our lives, from the least to the greatest, is capable of being performed with different ends and aims; and the likeness of the first Adam is, in this particular, capable of being transformed into the likeness of the second Adam, the world being scarcely cognisant of any change. These are the secret things of a man, of which God reserves the judgment to himself. Two may meet in the same market-place, and transact business with the same prudence and honour; while one refers all to the will

of God, and the other thinks not of God at all. Two may sit at the same domestic board, sharing alike its legitimate enjoyments; while one is living to God, the other for himself and his family. The world asks where is the difference, and we cannot show it them, for it is spiritually discerned. But God knows the difference, and we may each one know it for ourselves. The man of the world may know the difference if he will: he may look into his heart, and see that there is no such motive there; he may ransack the secret chambers of his bosom, and among the crowd of objects that keep him in a hurry of pursuit he will fail to find this one. And if he cannot look into other hearts to see who has the principle, he has not; and if he will not take the living testimony of any who profess it, he may at least search the scripture, and compare his own mind with the mind of Christ and the testimony of departed saints. The man of God does know the difference, for he feels that the will of his heavenly Father has become to him an object of the deepest interest and desire: prompt to recur, if at times overborne and forgotten; quick to be recalled, if banished by the occupations of the day; sensibly desired, while inadequately pursued; increasing in magnitude as the divine life advances; gradually gaining upon the diminishing interests of this world; consented to, delighted in, as that which is ultimately to absorb them all. Perhaps he remembers when it was not so, and can trace in the gradual change of motives a growing conformity to the character of his Lord. And why should it not grow on to perfect likeness? He performs, as other men, the necessary functions of existence—so did his Master; he fulfils the various duties of his station, in the common occupations

of life—so did Jesus; he maintains his place in society by honourable exertion—so it is probable that Jesus did. There is no incompatibility in this. It is, in fact, no question of doing or not doing; it is the *why*, not the *what*, of human action. The servant of Christ may leave things undone for the same reason that his Master did them, or do what his Master did not for the same reason that he did it not, to meet the purposes of God with a single desire to do his will. Christ knew perfectly that will, and could not mistake in doing it; man knows it imperfectly, and mistakes continually. Christ had all power to perform, as well as wisdom to discern; man has no power of his own, though he may draw out of Christ's fulness both wisdom to perceive and power to do. Herein is the difference. The resemblance is in the wish, the choice, the purpose. Can it be so very difficult to discover what these are?

CHAPTER III.

IN THE RULE OF LIFE.

'How readest thou?'—Luke, x. 26.

THERE is no doctrine of the gospel so much resisted by the natural mind unenlightened by the Spirit, as that of the utter corruption of human nature, and its total alienation from all goodness. Man's pride refuses the imputation, and he thinks his experience refutes it. In vain the testimony of scripture is made plain before him, wherein he who knows the heart of man declares it. 'God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.'* This was what God saw when he determined in his anger to destroy him. And when he looked again and determined not to destroy him any more, what he saw was still the same: 'For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.'† He found neither judgments nor mercies could amend him: for 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one;'‡ not God himself till he has cleansed it. The brier by longer growing would not bring forth grapes: no, though he had digged

* Gen. vi. † Ib. viii. ‡ Job, xiv.

about it and fenced it. 'And what could have been done more for it that he had not done,' when again 'he looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God? Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.'* Had there indeed been any germ of good in man, it must have shown itself under such a culture; in immediate communication with the Deity; under his miraculous guidance; taught by him and chastened by him every day; with all his goodness and all his vengeance made to pass before him. But they wore out his vengeance, as they wore out his love, till he exclaims, 'And why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint: from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it.'† Was the Almighty mistaken in his choice, unfortunate in the selection of a specimen to try the value of the mass? Not so. 'I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, for thou wast called a transgressor from the womb;' 'but thou knewest not.'‡ Man did not know the extent of his corruption, and nothing could be more calculated to manifest it than the trial of our nature under circumstances so favourable; it would seem perversity itself could scarcely have resisted them. But man did resist them; and the prophet of Israel, for himself and his people, and the church that should come after him for ever, thus confesses: 'We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our

* Ps. liii. † Isa. i. ‡ Ib. xlviii.

iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.'* And a later prophet thus confirms his word: 'The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.'† Lest it should be thought that there is any change, the Holy Spirit repeats again by St. Paul his word immutable: 'There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God; they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.'‡ And lest they whom grace had changed into another state of being, should forget their assimilation to the corrupted mass of nature, he thus addresses them: 'You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.'§

To this continuous testimony of the unerring word of God, the word of every true Church has been added — of none more decisively than our own. In every service we are made to say that there is no health in us. We appeal to God's omniscience, that we can of ourselves do no good thing; that we are unable to think a good thought. But it is all in vain; no natural man believes it; he appeals against it to his own reason and his own experience, and thinks they are on his side. It has been so from the beginning. Cain thought he could offer something acceptable to God, without having recourse to the appointed sacrifice; and Cain thought he had reason on his side; for the fruits of his fields, the produce of his own labour, seemed quite as reasonable an offering as the slain beast. The king of Israel had reason on his side when he spared what

* Isa. lxiv. † Jer. xvii. ‡ Rom. iii. § Eph. ii.

seemed to him the good things of the Amalekite, the unoffending kine, to be offered in sacrifice to the Lord; and I suppose the Pharisee, with his tithing and his morality, had reason too when he preferred himself to the degraded publican. But the judgment of God was against them; they reasoned—but he had spoken. And this men have been doing ever since, and are doing now. God says, 'There is no good in them;' they say there is a little—a very little—but still a little. He says, 'Without money and without price;' they say, 'We cannot purchase, truly, but still we will bring something.' He says, 'When they had nothing to pay;' they say, 'We have not indeed enough to pay our debt, but we will bring a present in our hands.' Heathens, more excusable because they had not heard, anxious to find something acceptable to their gods, gave their children to the fire, and their bodies to the crushing of their chariot-wheels. Papists, in mingled light and darkness, sought merit in supererogatory works, fantastic self-inflictions, and unnatural fervours. And now, with light increased, but not enough to see by, Protestants look for their goodness in the secrecy of their hearts, in their virtues and well-meanings; or they present God with their baptism, their churchmanship, or their alms-deeds. And it is still reason and experience that are made to oppose themselves to the acceptance of the truth.

It is deeply interesting, though very painful, to meet an amiable and upright man of the world upon this ground. He knows that he feels something he is accustomed to call virtue, and that he loves something he is accustomed to call goodness. He feels incapable of the vices he sees committed round him. He com-

pares his own upright, honourable, and it may be generous purposes, with the sordid viciousness of other men. There is a warmth of indignation in his bosom against injustice and oppression, which he takes for a hatred of iniquity ; whilst his admiration of every generous and noble action seems as if it could be nothing else than an innate love of holiness. Comparing themselves by themselves, and measuring themselves among themselves, it is evident that all are not alike ; the world has its good men and its bad ones, its honourable and dishonourable, its base and its noble; subjects of the prince of this world notwithstanding. It is in vain that God has included all men under sin, and said there is no difference; the upright man of the world sees and feels there is a difference, and he thanks God in his heart he is not like other men. He appeals to reason and to fact. Now if it were true that reason and experience are opposed to the word of God, that word must be true notwithstanding. But in fact, though his word may contain many things too great to be compassed by the former, and too deep to be sounded by the latter, there can be no real inconsistency between them. We call the ocean bottomless because our lines are not long enough to fathom it ; we call the stars of heaven numberless because we cannot count them. But in these things we are too wise to believe our senses, or be deceived by our incapacity. The light of science has undeceived us, while the evidence of our senses remains the same. So does the light of divine grace undeceive us with respect to the state of our hearts before God, though the shades and differences of human character remain still visible.

One principal cause of difficulty in the reception of

this truth is, that men think of sin as a succession of separate acts, rather than as a principle of action : of holiness, as the adopting of certain maxims rather than a state of being. A man may deal fairly to-day, and fraudulently to-morrow; nay, he may, at the same moment, give the boon of charity with one hand, and grasp the wages of iniquity with the other: but he cannot be at the same time righteous and unrighteous; he cannot be at once an honest and a dishonest man. We do not say that a natural man never does right, never acts properly, nor feels justly ; but we say of his actions, the best and the worst, that they flow from a principle of earthliness, self-interest, and expediency, not from love of God, or love of holiness : they flow from the same principle that would have induced him, had it seemed desirable and expedient, or to his interest, to do the exact contrary. In the words of our Church we say of such good actions, 'For that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.' And if the fairest of the fruit be sin, shall we venture to say there is goodness in the root? Men love certain demonstrations of goodness which are well accepted in society, and they love some sins for the same reason : this is not to love goodness. They love some features of a holy character that commend themselves to their natural taste, but they hate others that are equally beautiful in the sight of God; this is not to love holiness. The natural man does not love either. When he beheld the only perfect personification of them in one 'made in the likeness of men,' there was 'no beauty in him that they should desire him;' and when they see the nearest assimilation to it that is to be

found among men, they do not like it still. 'If ye were of the world,' our Saviour says, 'the world would love its own:' not for their goodness—'but because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you:' not for their unworthiness—'Whom God chooseth, he also sanctifieth,' and these are they whom the world does not love.

At least, then, God and man are not agreed upon the characters of that goodness and holiness they approve; which discloses another and very powerful cause of the difficulty presented to the natural mind by the doctrine of man's utter corruption; a cause more particularly connected with our present subject. Man's notions of goodness are not derived from the Scripture; they do not in many respects consist with it: so that while they cherish in themselves, and admire in others, something they take for virtue, it is not the righteousness of God. The world, as distinguished from the people of God, is called in Scripture, 'a kingdom, the kingdom of this world,' as distinguished from 'the kingdom of God.' Now, a kingdom has not only a separate king; it has laws, administrations, and sanctions, distinctively its own. Its judicature takes no cognisance of the transgression of the laws of other nations. A man lives justified and free, if only his conduct be conformed to the legislative code under which he lives. How true is this of the kingdom of this world as alienated from the government of God! It has its right and wrong, its good and evil, and does not inquire, and does not care, whether they are in conformity with the divine law. They may agree, or they may not; for the most part they do not; it does not signify, for it is not by this that any man's goodness is

tried before the world's tribunal: and till grace has changed his heart, and transferred his allegiance, it is not by this that any man tries his own. What wonder if he stand justified and approved before himself and the world, while before God he stands utterly condemned? The word of God is not his rule of life.

But the word of God was the only rule of life to our Lord Jesus Christ. We might have expected it to be otherwise. One with the Father, sharer in his counsels from the beginning, knowing in all things his mind and will, the Son could have no occasion for the written law. His own wisdom and holiness were his sufficient rule. But it became him, in taking upon him the nature of man, to fulfil all righteousness, not after the secret counsels of his omniscience, but according to the rule laid down for us. It was not the least part of his humiliation, that he who was the Lawgiver of the universe, the eternal Arbitrator of right and wrong, himself learned obedience to a strict and narrow rule, and condescended to refer to its decisions every action of his life. And not the least proof of man's unlikeness to him, is that spirit of insubmission which revolts against all authority: as if every restraint upon action or opinion were degrading to a thinking being, an encroachment on his independence. It is extremely important that we study our Lord's character in this respect; for it is a point on which we make great mistakes. The only man capable of judging for himself, beyond the possibility of error, was the man Christ Jesus: and yet it is apparent that he never did judge for himself, in any instance, irrespectively of God's revealed word. I say his revealed word, the letter of his law; for I recollect no instance in which Christ appeals

to the secret purposes of God in explanation of his conduct, perfectly as they must have been known to him. He did, indeed, in his character of prophet and teacher, become himself the revealer of God's will to man, the propounder of the things that were to come: but to explain and justify his words and actions, 'It has been written,' is the only argument I find him to have used. Painfully foreboding the defection of his companions, Jesus does not appeal to his divine prescience for the fact, but to the fore-written word of God, 'For it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.'* When about to go up to Jerusalem for the consummation of his work, he does not say, 'To accomplish what was decreed in the counsels of the eternal Three before the world began,' but simply, 'That all things written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.'† When with judicial violence he drove the money-changers from the temple, he adduces the written word alone for his authority, not his own right as Lord and master of the temple: 'It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer.'‡ Again, when his disciples are impeached for the transgression of the Sabbath-day, he, the only good, the only perfect, the one Example, stooped to defend them on the example of another recorded in Holy Writ, 'Hast thou not heard what David did?' &c. When practical questions were proposed for his decision, his answer was still, 'How readest thou? What say the Scriptures?' Then came the hour of temptation! With what weapons did the Son of God defend himself against

* Mark, xiv. 27. † Luke, xviii. 31. ‡ Mark, xi. 17.

the assaults of Satan? Not with appeals to what the adversary might well have understood, his own eternal Godhead, the immutable purpose of his Deity, and his omniscient penetration into the base design. He answers with nothing but the plain word of God, 'It is written,' as if that were his only guide.

I have said, that as prophet and teacher he was himself the revealer of God's will to man: but examining his words more closely, I perceive that even in these characters Jesus rather expounded the word than added to it, rather elucidated former prophecies than uttered new ones. For in presenting himself as teacher of the people,* the whole of his discourse is an exposition of the scripture; and in assuming the character of prophet,† to make known the things that were to come, it is by no new prediction, but simply this: 'For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.' And what appears to me still more remarkable, in his last interview with his disciples when about to return to his Father; he might have disclosed to them the state of the departed, the secrets of the grave, and the Hades he had visited. In the plenitude of recent experience, how likely that he should drop, at parting, some intimation of the things unseen, beyond what is given to other men to know! And yet he did not: all he did was this, 'He opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.'

Two wonders fill the mind in the contemplation of these things. That He, the source of all wisdom and knowledge, the originator of all law, and the root of all

* Luke, iv. 17. † Luke, xxi.

authority, should submit himself to the decision of a written rule: that man so ignorant, so fallible, so perverted, should think it significant of intellectual greatness, to subject that very rule to his own judgment and experience. This is done continually: so continually, so habitually, that, as in all things to which we are habituated, we are often unconscious of the process. But every man may perceive, if he will but examine his own mind, to what extent he daily abrogates the written word, to substitute his own ideas in its stead, and justifies himself in doing so. Let the upright, candid man, formed on the best model of this world's excellence, place himself for a moment by the side of this picture, and by the light of his own consciousness compare himself with this divine Example. His spirit, when he rises, is full of the '*why*' and the '*what*' and the '*wherewithal*'—business, possessions, pleasures, this world's past, and this world's future. For a few minutes, if he can, he forces these things from his thoughts, that he may turn them to God in prayer, perhaps in the reading of his word. But these are invited guests, the others are the inmates of his bosom. And if in that sacred word he reads, 'Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; labour not for the meat that perisheth,' &c., conviction does not seize his mind, that he is in a forbidden state, a state of reprehension. He does not fall down before God, and say, 'My soul cleaveth to the dust: quicken thou me in thy way.' He sees nothing more reasonable than that his mind should be thus occupied with the things that immediately concern him—nothing more important than to answer the demands of this life. The word of God says otherwise, and condemns

those who have not God in all their thoughts. But this is mere enthusiasm to him; it is even better to fulfil his practical and social duties. And notwithstanding what he has been reading, he goes forth with a peaceful conscience, and erected brow, as if he had nothing to be ashamed of before God or man. The word of God is not the rule by which he judges of his state.

Is it that to which he forms his conduct? His morning business—that is conformed to the common rules of business, with frequent disguises, frequent evasions of the truth, frequent transgressions of God's commandments. His evening pleasures—they are made up of the proscribed pomps and vanities of a wicked world, enjoyed in the company of the ungodly; often promoted by others' sins, if not his own; involving frequent misuse of the gifts of Providence, and certain forgetfulness of the Giver. If it were said to such an one, 'Your statements are not correct, your transactions are not just,' he would admit it; but it is the custom, it cannot be dispensed with. 'Those people you passed your time with are profane and ungodly:' it is true; but they are such company as becomes my station. 'The wasteful excess of your banqueting is a perversion of God's gifts:' it is so; but it is the habit of polite society. 'That theatre, that race, those games of chance—the zest in all of them, is the excitement of ungodly passions: they draw thousands into sin and misery, and lead them to perdition:' it may be so; but they are rational amusements notwithstanding. Take, then, the holy Volume in your hand, and from its hallowed pages read, 'Be not conformed to this world;' 'Come out from among them and be ye separate, and

touch not the unclean thing;' 'Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?' 'Be ye not therefore partakers with them; for the fruit of the Spirit is in all righteousness and truth, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord; and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them;' 'Come out from her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.' Does he shrink before this judgment of the written word, and say, 'Behold, I have sinned?' No: he smiles at such precision; it is very well for those that think so; a little pharisaical, however, and withal ostentatious; and he raises his head the higher, in conscious freedom from such narrowing prejudice. The word of God is not the rule by which he judges of his actions.

Is it the rule of his religion? It is written, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me.'* 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'† 'There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.'‡ 'Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed; for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds.'§ This and much more is written—a whole volume is written with the pen of inspiration, to show that there is but

* John, iv. 6. † Ib. iii. 3. ‡ Acts, iv. 12.
§ 2 John, 9–11.

one religion, but one Saviour, but one way of salvation, one truth, one gospel, for all to whom it is sent. Is this the religion of the world's good man? Is it that on which he frames his prayers, and builds his eternal hopes, and walks so confidently towards his end? He knows and God knows. We cannot read his heart, but such is not the language of his lips. He calls it prejudice and narrow-mindedness; if he denies not this one way of salvation, he at least knows many other ways; so confidently speaks he of the state of those who never walked in this. The religion of his teachers, his friends, and most probably his own, is not the religion of the gospel: but they are very religious notwithstanding; and those who doubt it, manifest, as he thinks, a most harsh, ungenerous judgment; as if one set of people, and one set of opinions only, could be acceptable to God. Yet Christ has said it, and the Holy Spirit has said it, and all who have written under this inspiration have said it too. Of him who denies it, what can we say, but that the word of God is not the rule by which he regulates his own principles, and measures the principles of others? And what is the standard that is taken instead? The same as it has been from the beginning — reason, tradition, the authority of his fathers, and the maxims of society. To the natural man it seems so improbable the path of life should be a narrow one; so very unlikely, a few persons only, and they not seemingly the best, should be walking in light, while the multitude sit in darkness. It is in vain the scripture says it is so. The best men that live, and the best men that have died, think and act differently; and it appears so much more consonant with human reason, and divine legislation, that each man,

walking uprightly according to his conscience, should be justified in the religion he professes, that the natural man entirely disregards what the scripture says of those, who, going about to establish their own righteousness, refuse to submit themselves to the righteousness of God.

What a contrast does such a character present to the image of our Lord! Can a man thus acting, thus thinking, be so deluded as to suppose he is walking in Jesus' footsteps; in his who never acted, never spoke, but with the word of God in his mouth, and its rule in his heart; who, Deity as he was, never reasoned when his Father had spoken? In his own beautiful discourse on the mount, he himself drew the contrast between the laws of the world and the laws of his Father, the authority of men and the authority of God. Throwing spiritual light on the written law, speaking in the name of his Father, 'The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me,' how does his immutable '*I say*' stand for ever opposed to the '*It has been said*,' and '*Ye have heard*,' of this world's reasonings and conclusions!

Is it not strange, that in the face of such an example, any one who professes to admit its divinity, or even its moral perfectness, should conceive that they evidence an acuter intellect and a nobler spirit, by what is called independence of opinion and thinking for themselves? Man has no right to an independent opinion on any subject whatever, unless it be one on which the Scripture has not spoken, or has spoken so obscurely as to leave a reasonable doubt of the meaning of the words; and then only as to what is said, never whether what is said is meant. It is of course certain that God not only expressed his real meaning but that he chose the

most accurate language in which to express it. And whoever forms an opinion in opposition to the plain meaning of the words, does virtually either deny the Bible to be the word of God, or exalts his own judgment above the judgment of his Maker. Would that men could be persuaded to consider how many times a day they do this, in thought, in word, in deed, and proudly justify themselves in doing so! 'A man who thinks for himself,' is a term of commendation in society. 'He has a great mind, he will think for himself,' as if the terms were synonymous. Well, if it meant only an independence of man's judgment; or perhaps not always well then: for the opinions of men, if they be men of God, may be of value as derived from him; and the opinions of the Church, if it be the Church of Christ, should be the echo of his own; to be subjected, however, to the test of Scripture. But this it does not mean. There are so few things upon which God has not spoken, except in the fields of science. There man may revel harmlessly in the plenitude of his own wisdom, provided he touch not the plain meaning of the written word; but in respect of character, and conduct, and principles, and all the relations of man to man, to his Creator, and himself, there is nothing of which God has not spoken; and man cannot and must not think upon them independently. Christ did not; angels in heaven do not. Perhaps they do in hell, for in Satan's kingdom independence has ever been a boast and a distinction; whether a reality, I leave the boasters to decide. They who, like some of old, indignantly exclaim, 'We were never in bondage to any one;' who are determined to serve God according to their conscience, to follow the dictates of their own understanding, and go

to heaven their own way, know best whether they be free indeed, or in subjection to another master. They who dare commit sin in defiance of their Maker, know whether they dare abstain from it, in defiance of the world. They whose discretion judges of the fitness of God's commands, know whether they dare observe them against the most minute requirements of this world's fashions and opinions. It is a miserable fiction. 'His servants ye are to whom ye obey,' but independent you are not. Only resist the yoke that is upon you, and you will find how strong it is. Struggle to free yourself from the chains that bind your conscience, and you will know presently how tight they are. You have walked according to the course of this world, despising the narrowness of those who form their sentiments upon the letter of scripture, and calling yourselves liberal and independent. Make a new experiment; conform yourselves to the righteousness of God, and justify yourselves by the word of God. You know you must not, you dare not. Make but the effort, and you will instantly feel the galling of the yoke that is upon you. Have you not already felt it often? If you have never wished to give yourselves to God entirely, have you not wished, under some good impression, some stirring of natural conscience, to do something, or abstain from something, in deference to the divine will, but could not, for fear of the world's censure? While reading the Bible, or listening to the preacher, or discoursing with a pious friend, you have felt conviction stealing upon your mind; your understanding was about to yield; but you called to mind the opinions of others, the learned, the influential, perhaps the loved of this world—you could not differ from them; your very

opinions are enslaved. And that word of God, so frequently made use of to point a jest or embellish a sentence—would you venture in the same company to produce it as an authority? Need I tell you, Jesus not only acted on it, but scarcely ever spoke without producing it, and never justified himself by any other rule?

'The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.' They have a king, a code, a legislation of their own, and are generally content to abide by their decisions. In the kingdom of Christ, insubmission to the plain letter of scripture, a wish to look into the secret purposes of God, and 'to be wise above what is written,' has at all times in some measure, and at this time in particular, distracted the Church, and tainted the simplicity of divine truth. So much of corrupted nature is there in us, men will even here be thinking for themselves, and call their views deep, enlarged. These Biblical freethinkers take the word of God for their rule, but then it is in a different sense—in any sense, they do not much care what, so it be but different from that in which any simple mind would understand it. I believe this disposition to be the chief source of the divisions and extravagances that now disgrace the Church. That Biblical criticism, as exercised by the really studious, has thrown light on passages of Holy Writ, obscured by change of time, and difficulty of language; that the deep experience of the really devout has done still more to explain those passages which are mysterious only till they are realised in the heart, it is not possible to doubt; and assuredly God intended we should thus impart to others the benefit of such light as he may give to each. But

it does appear to me, that those who talk most of deep views, and large views, and do certainly most excel in new views, are different persons from those who, by study or experience, have really sounded the depths of divine knowledge. These last have been men of close application, and laborious research, whom the world heard little of, but by the matured and long-digested product of their labours. Or they have been men who, under severe trial of their faith, in close intercourse with God, and devoted administration to the secret mind of others, have obtained a peculiar insight into the language of the Holy Spirit, and tried the value of their ore in many a fire, before they produced it to the world. These were men who spent their lives in kindling some small taper, for such it was, in comparison with the light of revelation, and left it burning on their tombs. They were not the young, the loud, the popular, who blazon the day with torches to find out something new, and discover the secrets of the Lord; finding every day a fresh pearl, for which they are willing to sell all they had before, and this too, when they can find another. They were not critics who produce fresh readings every year, commentators who find an altered sense at every re-perusal of the word; and give to the public, not the matured result of patient study, but every crude notion as it arises. Such critics have made intellect seem the enemy of truth, which God could never mean it should be. He foresaw, indeed, that it would become so. He knew how powerful an instrument in Satan's hand would be the reasoning, questioning pride of man, when induced to array itself against the reception of the word. When he determined to reveal to babes what was hidden from the wise and

prudent, it was not that he held in abhorrence gifts he had bestowed ; or that superior endowments made the creature an object of dislike to his Creator, that he should exclude him from his mercy. Impossible ! But it pleased him to clothe his gospel in such a form, that none but the simple-minded could receive it ; and while he gave his revelation in terms so plain, that the wayfaring man, though a fool, could not err therein, unless wilfully choosing darkness rather than light, he cast such mysterious greatness about his secret purposes, that the wisest should fail to penetrate them. It pleased him there should be but one way to divine knowledge ; the ignorant, the poor, and simple, were ready to enter it, and his Spirit had only to unclose the gate—but for the wise, the learned, the disputatious, a previous process was required : ' If any man will be wise, let him become a fool.' They must go back and enter by the same gate of child-like ignorance, receiving the dictation of the Spirit without question and without dispute. This the All-wise foresaw they would not do. They would take his word as if it were the word of man, and examine it by the light of their own wisdom ; and, doing so, would either reject it wholly, receive only so much of it as they could fully explain, or, admitting its divine authority as a whole, would subject each separate part to whatever construction seemed most agreeable to their natural reason. Well might God foretell that not many such would be saved, although he named a way by which they might be. That which seemed impossible with men was possible with God. Some such are saved ; not by conforming his plan of salvation to their character, and unclosing his mysteries to satisfy their wisdom, but by a quite different process. Touched by

his Spirit, they consent to become fools, to read, believe, and obey. But, alas! how often is this the end, when it should be the beginning; often even of a religious course! What years of holy contentment are lost! what seasons of doubt and despondency endured, because men will reason when they should believe, or will have other guides for their belief, than the plain letter of the scriptures! There cannot be an object of more painful interest to an enlightened mind, than to watch the progress of those amiable and almost holy beings who seem to seek peace, and find none, to ask and not receive, to live in search of God, and yet to live without him. But never can God's promises be disannulled. To him that knocks, the door must be opened; to him that asks for the Holy Spirit, it must be given. There is something at the bottom that we do not see; there is a reserve, an insubmission somewhere, that blinds the eye at the very moment of its anxious search. I can imagine it was exactly such a one that Jesus saw and loved; and every pious bosom loves and wonders when it sees the same—so near the kingdom, and yet unable to enter. Jesus probed the heart, and found where the canker lay beneath the seeming promise; he brought it, as he did all things, to the test of scripture—'How readest thou?' Awhile it responded to the test: but there was one thing too much;—he went away, and Jesus let him go. I think I read in this an explanation I could never find elsewhere. Men take their Bibles; we see them study, and we believe they pray: they seem willing, they seem humble, but it cannot be:—there must be something under all. We cannot reach it; we have not that penetrating eye which once glanced through the covering of moral excellence, to the sordid

preference which lay beneath it. But the word of God could do it: it could show to those individuals what it is they stop at; what part of its testimony it is that they refuse; which of its requirements they see no necessity for; which of its doctrines their reason disputes against. Is it what the word tells them of themselves? what it tells them of Christ? what it tells them of the world? Whatever it be, if they would have peace, let them find it out, and give it up; or it will be to them what the young man's riches were to him. They will go away, and Christ will let them go. They will still ask and receive not, because they ask amiss.

When I observe how much the simplicity of divine truth has been departed from, and man has made difficult what God has made plain, I cannot but think there has been in our days too much reading and too much talking: and though I do not say too much teaching, it is not impossible our teachers may have too much departed from the example of Christ in the manner of their teaching. I should seem a fool to many, if I were to say how simple a thing, how plain a thing to an honest mind, I think the religion of Christ to be—so much of it as concerns our personal salvation, and the effects to be produced upon us. It might seem even bold to say, I think the Bible, for the purposes for which it was intended, the plainest and the easiest book that ever has been written; and while experience proves, what the word itself declares, that no man understands it without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, I believe he requires that assistance, not to enlarge his intellect and improve his wit, but to reduce him to the ignorance and simplicity of childhood, without which he will not be instructed. Of this I am sure; if they who have

made some progress in a religious course, find themselves harassed by uncertainties in doctrine, or confounded by the clangour of disputation, they had better leave controversy and the opinions of men, and betake themselves in simplicity and prayer to the plain letter of the written word. They had better become deaf till they can hear its language, and dumb till they can speak it without additions and without reserves. 'What shall I do to be saved?' is a question that in some form or other has agitated the world from the beginning of time. Volumes have been written upon it, and nations convulsed by it, and the united intellects of man expended in vain to solve it. The scripture has answered it in one plain sentence—so plain, that nothing but wilful blindness can ever more mistake the way. And those practical difficulties, which the amalgamation of the church with the world has so greatly multiplied, and the wish to unite what God has separated has now made almost endless, how easily might those too be terminated, by simply referring them to scripture! 'What saith the scripture?' 'How readest thou?' 'Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.'

Who then follows Paul, and who follows Christ, in their submission to the word of God? The man of God, who takes it, first, as the rule by which he judges of his own character; believing he is what the Bible says he is, one of two things—a sinner by nature, or by grace a saint; lost by nature, or by grace redeemed; condemned in Adam, or justified in Christ. Thus Jesus: 'If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.'* 'These are they which testify of me.' And

* John, v. 31.

St. Paul: 'I judge not mine ownself; there is one that judgeth.' Who takes it, secondly, as the rule by which he forms his principles, asking not what others think, venturing not to think for himself, believing there is one truth, one religion, one way of salvation, even as the scripture saith. This did Christ: 'My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me:' and St. Paul: 'Woe is me, if I preach any other gospel.' Thirdly: he who takes it as the rule by which he judges others. No names of men, no dazzling qualities, no bonds of intimacy, can induce him to put darkness for light, or bitter for sweet; every man is to him that which God seeth and God saith, and nothing more. It was so with Christ: 'I can of mine ownself do nothing; as I hear, I judge;' and with St. Paul: 'To his own master he standeth or falleth.' Lastly, it is he who takes the scripture for his rule of life. We have shown that Jesus did so; and surely Paul did so, for it was to him 'a small thing to be judged of man's judgment.' A Christian who follows in their footsteps knows no right, no wrong, but according to God's revealed word. If he is questioned, there is his reason—if he is reproached, there is his defence—if he is in doubt, this, and this only, can resolve him.

CHAPTER IV.

IN HIS INTERCOURSE WITH THE WORLD.

'Walk in wisdom towards them that are without.'—
Col. iv. 5.

THE path of life is said in scripture to be a narrow way. A narrow way is easily departed from, and may be difficult to regain: it requires a watchful eye and steady step; a careless walker will be always swerving to the right hand or the left. But a narrow way is not necessarily an indistinct one, intricate, and easily mistaken; nor is it necessarily a rough one, on which, while he keeps it, the traveller finds it difficult to walk. What, then, is the fact with respect to the path of everlasting life? It is worth while to study the scriptural account of it, contrasted with the broad road that leadeth to destruction. For it does appear to me that men have by some means found a third way, which answers to neither the one nor the other, and which, if less narrow and exclusive than the former, and less broad and well-peopled than the latter, is more difficult than either. And I think, besides, that it is the children of the kingdom who are toiling on this difficult and dangerous road, mistaking it for the way that is appointed them. But sure I am that it is not there we shall find traces of the Saviour's footsteps.

Jesus tells us of two ways only ; and throughout the scriptures there is no mention made of any other. He says that one is broad, full ; because the gate is wide, easily entered ; and because the way is wide, not easily departed from without design. Some have thence concluded that this path is smooth, pleasant, unobstructed. Jesus does not say so; he speaks only of the largeness of the entrance, the plenitude of space, the multitude that walk there, and the destruction in which it terminates. Other scriptures have described it. They speak of it as a 'crooked way,' a 'dark way,' a 'miry way.' David calls it a 'dark and slippery way.' Solomon says, that 'thorns and snares are in it;' and Isaiah, that 'they who go therein shall not know peace.' Add to this the testimony of those who have tried it, and we need be in no mistake about it. For what is the history of every man but a record of the toils, the dangers, the difficulties, the sufferings he has found upon this crowded path ? Who walks in peace upon it ? who treads it fearlessly and stumbles not ? who finds a shelter in it from the wind and storm ? who gathers on its banks the medicinal herb and ever-blooming flower ? No: let not the inexperienced deceive themselves about this road; it is easily found and easily kept, but an easy walk it is not. It is full of difficulties, and there is no light to walk by: it is full of enemies, and there is no balm for the wounded ; the blight of sorrow is there, but no place of shelter from its keenness. It is a dark way, for the light of truth is not upon it; it is a cold way, for the warmth of heaven is not in it ; it is a crooked way, where no man sees before him, nor knows whither the next turn may bring him ; it is a perilous way, where no man lies

down in safety, nor knows that he shall rise in peace. Such is the broad road that leadeth to destruction.

Jesus tells us of but one other; and because it is narrow, men have concluded it is difficult. But again I observe that Jesus does not say so. I could fancy I see it in the white path that skirts that mountainous cliff; the precipice on the one side, on the other the broad greensward, seeming smooth at a distance, but really impracticable. Mile beyond mile, it lies distinct before us; broken by the undulations of the cliff, but reuniting as we advance upon it. It is easily departed from, and lies very near to danger: he would be at great risk who should walk there in the dark, with blinded eyes or an inebriated brain; but if he be sober, be vigilant, the solid rock must give way beneath his feet before he can be endangered. How speak the scriptures of this heavenward path? One who had tried it speaks thus of it: 'Then shalt thou walk in the way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble; when thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.' Another says, 'The way of the righteous is made plain.' The Lord by Jeremiah saith, 'Walk therein, and ye shall find rest to your souls;'—'Walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.' Isaiah says, the way of holiness is plain, a fool shall not err therein; and Solomon, that it is a way of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace. St. Luke alludes to it as the way of peace, lighted by the day-spring from on high, and applies to it the prophetic words, 'The crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places smooth.' These are not definitions of a path so difficult to distinguish, that the most willing cannot tell whether

they are on it or beside it; they do not signify something so obscure, that he who is upon it cannot see his way, and must go forward at a venture; so very intricate, that the most watchful is at risk to lose himself. There must be some mistake in this; and if I feel that I cannot appeal with as much confidence as before to those that have tried it, the thought again occurs, that we must have lighted on some other path, or made crooked for ourselves what God has said is straight.

The way by which some Christians try to reach their end is a difficult one indeed; but it is none of God's appointing. There is no waymark of his upon it, but what bids them leave it. The erratic traveller, less mindful of the place he makes for, than of the objects by the way, choosing to forsake the beaten track, tries every defile, and plunges into every thicket, meets a thousand dangers that were not in his path; sometimes swamped, sometimes benighted, always impeded, and not really advancing till he regains the road. If Christians choose to travel forward thus, it is no wonder that their way is difficult, but it is not religion makes it so. Such is not the path the Saviour's previous footsteps have trodden into smoothness, and lighted with the lamp of his own Spirit. His is a way of uprightness, straight, erect, uniform. Theirs is the way of compromise, of equivocation, of spiritual dishonesty. It is neither the broad road of the world nor the narrow road of the gospel; and since there is no other, it is no road at all, but a trackless and inextricable wilderness. They who stray into it never know where they are; they ask directions of everybody, and see not which way to turn: all is hazard and

uncertainty. What wonder if the ground be rugged, and the walk uneasy! 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.' But the lamp of God is fixed where he lighted it; it sheds a steady blaze on the heavenward track, wherein they who walk can never be in darkness. But it is a lamp that cannot be removed; men cannot take it down and carry it with them wherever they choose to go. In their dubious wanderings through the ways of indecision they may see it perhaps, just see it at a distance, mercifully shining to direct them back again; but many a trackless mile must be past over before its beams fall again upon their steps—'God is not mocked.' He has said that men must separate at the outset—at the gate, and his people must walk apart; his people do not believe it. He reads in many an awakened bosom this resolution, 'I will walk with God, but I will not separate from the world.' Sometimes he lets them try, but there is anger in his acquiescence: 'Ephraim is wedded to idols, let him alone;' 'The Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart.' There was a straight way from Egypt into Canaan—there was nothing to prevent; sooner must the Red Sea part its waters, than Israel's steps be turned aside; hosts of armed enemies could not have said to him, Go round. It was his faithlessness which sent him into the wilderness. If any one who thinks he has entered by the gate of life does not find within it a way of pleasantness and peace, does not see a lamp upon it, always burning to direct his steps, finds himself in a labyrinth of uncertainties, instead of a straight path, I entreat him to consider whether God has at any time

seen in the secrecy of his heart a resolution such as I have named. Is it in acquiescence with God's plan, or in some one of his own devising, that so much of darkness and difficulty has been met with ?

These remarks are not inapplicable to those mazes of doctrinal error in which some erratic spirits continually involve themselves, because they will not walk simply in the beaten track. The way of salvation is plain and straightforward, long tried and safely trodden by the saints who have gone before us. But because it is so, the spiritual adventurer does not like it. Like the vagrant stragglers of an advancing army, they cannot content themselves with a steady progression; they must be hither and thither with endless bustle and disturbance, though the end of all is only to return and rejoin the main body on the road. The world esteems them lost—it is mistaken ; their head is turned, as the expression is, but their hearts are right with God ; they have left all for Christ. The sober Christian sees them depart with pain, and vainly cries after them to return : yet does he not despair of them; he knows that mercy will not let them lose themselves. But when, with weariness and fatigue, and many hurts, they come back again, and find themselves just no farther on their way to heaven than if they had walked simply forward with the company whose sobriety they despised, let them never say they got their hurts and dangers and fatigues on the straight path to heaven. This by the way. Our subject is rather with the practical difficulties of a religious course, arising out of the position of a child of God in an ungodly world.

What is his position ? The same exactly as his Saviour's was. ' Ye are not of the world, even as I am

not of the world ;' ' It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord ;' ' Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ ;' ' Crucified unto the world, and the world unto us.' Jesus was a holy being, dwelling for a short season among sinful creatures, in the dominions of that prince of this world, between whose seed and himself there had been enmity from the beginning. How was it to be expected that such a one would live in such a world ? Doubtless, had he consulted his own feelings, he would have withdrawn himself from all contact with creatures of a character and destiny so unlike his own. He would have spared himself their insults and reproaches, the sight of their sufferings, and the disgust of their sins, by living secluded till the hour of expiation came. This he did not ; he could not thus have accomplished the Father's will, or fulfilled the purposes of his existence here. It is difficult to understand the delusion of those mistaken ones, who have thought to follow Christ by a life of solitude and abstraction — soldiers that hid themselves in the day of battle, labourers that took shelter from the heat and burden of the day. In our time there is not much temptation to seclusion ; but if any one under the influence of a fervid piety feels disposed to leave the station in which Providence has placed him, on account of the obstacles it opposes to his principles, he should well consider, before he recedes, whether they are difficulties or impossibilities : if the latter, he must fly from them. God places no man in a situation in which he cannot live a holy and religious life ; therefore, come there how he may, he is not where God would have him be, and must withdraw at any sacrifice ;—but if the former, Christ never

fled from difficulties, never shunned obloquy, nor hid himself from opposition. Or when the newly awakened spirit feels the ties of natural connexion become onerous by reason of uncongeniality of sentiment, much is to be considered before those ties are severed. We must leave all for Christ, but then we must be sure it is for Christ; we must be sure it is not to lighten our own cross, by flying from the influence we might have resisted, and escaping the opposition we might have borne with. No earthly ties or earthly duties can be pleaded in excuse for sin. It is impossible; because God never places any man in such an opposition of claims, that one or other of his laws must needs be broken. There is a first commandment, and the second is like unto it; they can never stand in competition. Perhaps we mistake our social duties, calling by that name some sinful compliances, which stain our conscience, whilst we want courage to refuse them. Perhaps the temptation to sin arising from our new connexions does not so much proceed from without as from within: we fear their censures, when we should only bear with them; we desire their approbation, when we know it to be against the mind of God. Thus is it our feelings, rather than our connexions, that require to be changed. If no duty binds us to them, and no bonds of providential appointment unite us, we may better show our honest fear of sin, and willingness to part with all for God, by removing from the temptation, than presuming on our power to overcome it. But we must not break the ties of nature, where we need only loosen them. We must not cease to love, where we should only love differently; and in all cases we must be sure it is the fear of sinning against our

principles, not the fear of disgrace and difficulty in maintaining them, that induces us to abandon our position in life, and hide ourselves from the legitimate intercourse of society. This did not Christ. 'I spake openly to the world; in secret have I said nothing.'

On the other hand, Christ never wilfully exposed himself to temptation. Pure and sinless as he was, and all-powerful to resist it as he knew himself to be, Jesus did not go of his own choice into the wilderness, to try his strength against the tempter. Wherever that event is mentioned, it is distinctly said, 'He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness,' an expression peculiar to those passages, as if on purpose to distinguish that act from every other of his life, and show us that he, even he, went not willingly to meet his Father's enemy, and listen to the language of seduction. What a lesson, what a reproof! We, predisposed as we are to sin, incapable of resisting it as we know ourselves to be—do we go boldly and without necessity where Satan keeps his court, where he spreads his blandishments, where he knows we must meet him, and either defeat his wiles or be seduced by them? Do we venture to say, that if our own principles are good, there is no risk to us in any company, in any place? can we walk side by side with the enemies of God, and sit in the councils of sinners, without any danger of being seduced from our allegiance to God? Jesus was not thus bold, though he might have been. If we set one step into the wilderness of temptation without the leading of the Spirit, for the fulfilment of some known command, we follow not in the footsteps of our Lord. God took him there, that he might in all things be more than conqueror. God may take us

there; and if he does, it will be to conquer too. But of those who go thither unbidden, to break a lance with the enemy for pastime; or, knight-errant like, to free the world from his enchantments, let no one think he does as Jesus did.

Next of the choice our Saviour made of his companions. We all have companions, associates, friends; individuals more or less numerous, with whom we pass our time, and hold a more intimate converse than with the world at large, exclusively of our domestic ties. Of these ties there is but one that admits of any choice, and that may be indissolubly formed before we have the light of truth to form it by. I include all voluntary intimacies. The choice that Jesus made was so contrary to what men thought it should be, as to be an occasion of scandal and reproach: 'The friend of publicans and sinners.' The charge was false; Jesus never chose profligacy or immorality for his companions; he endured their presence to accomplish his purpose of calling sinners to repentance; but he abode not with them, he lived not in their intimacy. Men did not know, or would not know, that it was converted sinners, sanctified publicans, Jesus took for his companions; he changed their hearts when he chose them for his own, and made them holy when he received them into his bosom. The favourite disciples, the family of Lazarus — all whom he particularly loved in earthly fellowship, whatever they had been before, became, by his influence, like-minded with himself. Thus were they fittest and the only fit; they were servants of his God and children of his Father: 'My God and your God, my Father and your Father.' He saw in them the crown of his rejoicing, the fruit of his Spirit, th

companions of his eternity. With such only did Jesus hold the intercourse of friendship. Calling to mind once more that interesting incident we have several times referred to, of his loving one whom he did not convert, we cannot but observe that this man did not become one of his familiar friends—he had none but those who were the children of his Father. He had intercourse with others in the common walks of life; in the streets, in the market-places, in the synagogues, wherever he could obtain a hearing from them; he sat as a guest at their tables, but still, as we shall presently observe, for the same purpose. Neither the Pharisee who mistook the way of life, nor the Sadducee who despised it, nor any subject whatsoever of the kingdoms of this world, became the companion of the holy Jesus, 'save only the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled.'

As with the master, so with the servant. The world wonders now, as it did then, at the exclusiveness of the Christian's preference. Why like only the society of those who exactly agree with you in matters of religion? why not the good of all sorts? There are the moral, the intellectual, the agreeable. They may not be quite so spiritual as you could wish, but they are a great deal better company than the people of God. Jesus did not think so. His followers cannot think so, if they be in any wise like-minded with himself. And in fact they do not. St. John says, 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren;' that very preference was a mark of their renewed state. And it is a mark now, and ever will be—a distinctive feature of the recovered image of our Lord, with this peculiarity, that it is more

visible than most other traces of his likeness; for whether it be understood or not, it is immediately perceptible to all. Let me not be misunderstood: I do not say that the pleasure we take in some religious company is a proof of our fellowship with Christ. The times are peculiar in this respect. We live in an age when the religious are also the refined, the sensible, the cultivated, and we may like their company on that account. Religious conversation too is become very animating, very interesting; its themes are among the favourite topics of the day; there is as much opportunity for wit, and sentiment, and knowledge, and feeling, to exercise themselves, and charm their auditors, as in any other manner of discourse. Nature can love all this: it always did. Crowds followed wheresoever Jesus went: hundreds listened whenever he spake. Unbelievers invited him to their feasts, as the world now invites some eminent preacher, or pious writer, to gratify their company, and hear his words; for the same purpose as they invite on the morrow a skilful musician or a sceptic poet. This is not that love of the brethren which St. John spake of, which Jesus manifested. That is a constant and exclusive preference which nature never felt. It is not the natural man that is beloved: it is the new name written on his forehead, the traces of the divine image drawn upon his bosom. It is loved wherever it is seen: it is loved in proportion as it is seen: it is loved in all conditions, amidst all alloy, and it is loved exclusively. Yes, exclusively; — because the preference which the people of God feel for each other as such, is quite distinct from every other preference. I do not say it is the only love. There is the love of general

benevolence due to all, the love of domestic relationship commanded by God, the love of natural assimilation implanted in our nature. Jesus knew some of them; but there was a preference that superseded them in the choice of his companions. They are not forbidden to us; but the time is coming when all must be superseded — the tie must be severed, the charm must be dissolved, and the bosom's sympathy be foregone for ever; we shall have only and love only those who are united with us in Christ. Can that be nothing now which must so soon be all? Impossible. On the contrary, every step that we advance in the divine life, this preference gains ground on every other. We may not have said to ourselves at the outset, I will change my friends: we may not have light enough to see the necessity of separation, nor grace enough to believe it, nor strength enough to effect it. But when we enter by the narrow gate, our companions do not follow; as we walk in the strait way, they are not by our side; insensibly the distance grows between us, and we soon perceive that we have changed our friends. There are a few cold efforts at re-union; they come a little way upon our path to seek us, but it is too strait for them, they cannot walk there, they do not like the company; and though they scarce know why, they find us not the same we used to be: 'If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature.' Bygone associations may induce us to go awhile with them; but this is alike impossible. The broad-road company seem as much changed to us as we to them, although not really so. We wonder at its dulness and insipidity, and at ourselves that ever we found pleasure in it: 'Old things are passed away, all things are become new.' Reunion is impossible: our

fresh-tuned spirits can no longer sound one note in unison with theirs; our altered hopes and joys and feelings meet with no response. If we are compelled to stay, like them, in Babylon, we hang our joyless harps upon the willows; we cannot sing the Lord's song where all is heartless dissonance. Could the children of this world take one glance into the bosom of a child of God, to see the pained weariness of the renewed spirit in an assembly which they call gay, at a table which they call convivial, they would learn more of the reality of the change than could be taught them by a thousand sermons.

But while worldly attachments are unloosed, and the zest of worldly associations dies away, does the Christian bosom become a desert?— does the breath of the Spirit, like the autumn blast, consign it to wintry barrenness? Far from it: his feelings are changed, not blunted; his affections are transferred, not chilled. Nay, there is a warmth of attachment in God's adopted family, of which nothing is known in the selfish intercourse of the world's society. It is thus described: 'Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.' This corporate sensitiveness is so perceptible as to become a cause of scandal and reproach. Men call it party spirit; eagerness to defend people, because they happen to be of our way of thinking; prejudice, partiality, because they are saints. Well, let it be all of these: we know to whom it was first said, 'When saw we *thee* an hungred?' &c., and who first answered, 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.' Where shall we find in all the world a union so intimate, a tie

so strong? Let us never clear ourselves from such a charge. Preference for God's people is the very badge of our profession. But if it be seen on the other hand, as, alas! it too often may, that these feelings of fellowship are wanting where they should be found; that the children of God's family do not love each other now, as they did when they were a despised and persecuted few; let us confess it and be ashamed. It is no sign of the vigour of the divine life within us; it is no feature of the renewed image of our Lord, that we should feel equal interest in his friends and his enemies: that if we are told such a one is pious, it is no commendation to our notice; and if we perceive them to be so, it makes no way to our affections till we can discover what they are beside. It was not so with Christ. We need not suppose that he loved all alike, even of those that were his. It was a human preference, excited probably by the charm of individual character, that attached him to St. John: but he did love all with a preferential love, such as he felt not for the world. He loved the impress of his Father's grace, whether appearing in the impetuous zeal of Peter, the guileless integrity of Nathanael, or the gentleness of the beloved apostle. Must I say anything to those who like to find pious people in the wrong; and, when they are in the wrong, feel the triumph of a rival rather than the shame of a brother? Or to those who have no *objection* to religious society upon occasions; find people amiable *notwithstanding* they are saints, and like them very well *in spite of* their devotions? The heart is said to be deceitful above all things; but his must be deceitful above all other hearts who can persuade himself that, so speaking, so feeling, he is of the mind

of Him who chose no company on earth but these, and will have none other in heaven.

But Jesus did enter into other company. It is not mentioned in Scripture that he never refused an invitation; probably he never declined sitting at meat with any who were desirous of receiving him. And why? He gives the reason for himself,—'He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' Wherever there was a sinner Jesus had business—'his Father's business.' It was not his pleasure took him there; it was not the social cheer or the unhallowed mirth; he never sat a silent spectator of ungodly sports. As if to make a mistake on this point impossible, there is no instance given of his going to a feast that we are not also told what passed there. In what character did Jesus appear? in what character was he invited? At the marriage of Cana, which preceded his public ministry, his mother being also present, it is probable he was bidden as an ordinary guest; but not the smallest reason is given us to suppose that this was an ungodly assembly, or any other than an innocent festivity on an occasion of domestic rejoicing. It was probably an entertainment of the poor, or the wife of the carpenter and his reputed son might not have been among the guests; and the friends of Mary were likely to be those who feared the Lord. The paucity of provisions rather confirms the former supposition. A supply of hospitable refreshment might be miraculously given; but Jesus would not have put forth the energies of his Deity to gratify sensual appetite and promote excess. In all other instances Christ was not bidden as an ordinary guest. He who was always in the streets, followed by multitudes, denounced

by the authorities, preaching strange doctrines, and performing miraculous works, was the wonder and excitement of the day, whether men believed him to be a prophet or impostor. All who invited him, invited him as such; expecting, no doubt, some manifestation of his extraordinary pretensions—and they were never disappointed. Jesus appeared always in his own peculiar character, a preacher of righteousness, a warning prophet, a witness for the Father. There is not an instance of his having sat at meat with sinners without reproving their iniquities; or sharing the hospitality of unbelievers without forcing them to listen to the words of truth. Wherever he was, he was about his Father's business,—'Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee.' If he had not, he would not have been at Simon's table. The Captain of our salvation never hid his colours, he never passed in company for one who came to do as others did, who thought no otherwise than the convivial, unbelieving, God-forgetting circle round him. Not only did he never forget his own character, but he never allowed it to be forgotten or mistaken.

Are the followers of Christ in doubt where they should go? Are his people at a loss to know in what circle they may visit? Wherever they can do as Jesus did. Wherever sin will be discountenanced by the manifestation of their holiness, or thoughtlessness be removed by the expression of their piety. Wherever they can say, 'I have something to say to thee' from God. In short, wherever they can keep their light so burning 'that it will give light to all that are in the house.' It must nowhere be hidden, nowhere be extinguished. When it begins to burn dim, when we feel less conscious of the divine life in our souls, less

value for it, and less willingness to betray it, when our thoughts are diverted from God, and indisposed for prayer, it is time to recede from the unhallowed atmosphere, as the recovering invalid shrinks from the chill which recalls the symptoms of disease. When men of the world take no offence at our religion, delight in our company, and cease to perceive any difference between themselves and us, it is time to remove our candle; it gives no light, it will go out and we shall be left in darkness. There is a difference in this respect between ourselves and our divine Example; he could not be corrupted by association with sinners. Himself all purity, all strength, he incurred no risk by anything. But I think we need take no account of this difference. Christ is a perfect example; he never presumed on his own safety to do what would be unsafe to us—he never braved evil because he had the power to resist it—he had no taste for the company of the ungodly—he could not make pastime of the world's vanities, and countenance its delusions, because secure from their contagion; and as Christ never acted on his strength to go where his Father's business did not call him, so we need never act upon our weakness to draw back when the same business demands our presence. His strength is ours, to use it as he used it; his Spirit is with us, to go where he would have gone. If our purpose in mixing with the world is as single as his was, and our bearing and conversation are conformable to our purpose, all will be safe to us as it was safe to him. But then to us, as to him, all will be uncongenial, all unsuitable; intercourse with ungodliness will be an effort of self-denying love, made for the accomplishment of our Father's will, for the fulfilment of our duties, the

promotion of religion, and the salvation of mankind. And what would be the consequences of such an assimilation?—the same as it was with Christ. The world would not have us—would not bear us. The children of this world will never endure the high, consistent bearing of a child of God. 'Whom makest thou thyself?' It is a high bearing. The believer comes into worldly company professing himself to be what those around him are not; professing to know what those around him know not. He despises the things they hold in their esteem, and sets no value on their applause. He refuses to conform to their fashions, or obey their rules, or speak their language. He will not enter into their amusements, and the reason he will not is because they are too frivolous, or too corrupt to become his character and expectations. This is a high assumption: no meekness, no lowliness of spirit will make it pass. He who was all goodness, all humility, could not reconcile the world to this. 'For thy good deeds we stone thee not, but because thou makest thyself the Son of God.' No terms of self-abasement in which we can clothe our pretensions avail us anything. We may confess with St. Paul that we are 'chief of sinners;' with Job, that we 'abhor ourselves in dust and ashes;' that we are even 'brands plucked from the burning;' the elevation on which we assume to stand by grace is still the same rock of offence. Men do not believe it, and they cannot forgive it. They will forgive us if we will conceal it, forbear it in our words, and deny it in our deeds; if we will reserve our wedding garment for fit occasions, and appear in their company dressed in earthly fashion; if we will forget our Father's house, and feed contentedly on their husks of vanity—

they would have borne with Jesus on such terms. If he would have withdrawn his claim to be the Son of God—if he would have denied before Pilate that he was a king, he need not have been crucified. Let us not believe that men will bear in us, miserable sinners like themselves, with nothing to show why we should be better or more beloved than they—no proofs of our adoption, but that Spirit within us which we cannot make manifest to unbelievers—let us not believe that society will bear in us what it could not in him who had all power and holiness to prove his Sonship. If we do in all company what Jesus did, society will soon discard us. They will not bear our indifference to their vain pursuits, still less our exhortations, and still less our warnings. Let us take the cross in our hands, and Christ's name upon our lips, and the seal of the Spirit on our forehead, and walk before all men in the strait road that leads to everlasting life, we shall soon be disembarrassed of all worldly company.

I have returned where I began. There is a road on which our Saviour's example can be no guide to us, because he was never there,—the path of indecision. Methinks it is like the waste common that belongs to no one—nobody smooths it, nobody clears it, or builds a wall, or sets a watch upon it; its crooked and uneven tracks run all at random, crossing and re-crossing, and tending to no issue. It is not Satan's, and it is not God's. In Satan's kingdom he, at least, will give us no disturbance; and in God's kingdom his Spirit will be our guide and guardian. Here no one owns us, all challenge us, and we must fight with all—with Satan, with the world, with the Spirit, and with ourselves—with our conscience sometimes, sometimes our inclina-

tions—resisted by all, and wounded by each in turn. It is a hard battle—who shall fight it out?

I may seem to have merged the subject of the Christian's intercourse with the world, in that of decision of character. I have done so, because I think the difficulty is in principle rather than in practice. I am confirmed in this opinion by remarking, perhaps by remembering, how much young converts think and talk about separation from the world—the *how* and the *why*, and the *how much*. It is a question, then, because it is a sacrifice; and it is a sacrifice, because the heart is still divided. We have all reasoned, and all written, to prove we must not do what, if our hearts were wholly with God, we could not do. When more established in the faith, instead of talking of separation, we find we are separated. Either the world has left us, or we have left the world; or God, with the outstretched arm of providence, has rent it from us. Separate purposes, separate affections, and a separate destiny, have wrought such a chasm between us, the difficulty is now to repass it, for the business, the duties, and charities of life. It is a common expression, when people act inconsistently with their character and station, to say, 'They forget themselves.' O! did the children of God never forget themselves, there would be few mistakes about their carriage in an ungodly world. If they knew always, and felt always what they are, and whither they are going, ye 'shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord'—'one with the Father, and the Son'—'I in him, ye in me, and I in you'—a single precept would be sufficient for all instruction—'Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.'

CHAPTER V.

IN THE CONDITION OF LIFE.

'The Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.'—
Matt. viii. 20.

Of all who have come into existence here, Christ Jesus is the only one who chose his own condition. This may seem at first sight to make our subject unnecessary: for where there is no election, there can be no responsibility. But it is not exactly so. In the birth-condition of every individual soul, one of two things only can be seen—a totally blind and undirected chance, or the absolute sovereignty of God. It is vain to ask of second causes, why, of two sentient beings, with equal claims and with as much at stake, one opens his eyes upon the splendour of a palace, the other upon the horrors of a cellar. Who can tell us why the promise of a princely house, whose cherished existence is his parents' hope, whose little limbs are wrapped in ermine, and fondly sheltered from every approach of harm; his faculties unfolding only to enjoy, increasing only to be satisfied; every feeling considered, every thought directed;—who can tell us, why the great one's darling did not change identity with the squalid offspring of degraded passion, and open his eyes upon filth and profligacy, his ears upon blasphemy and falsehood; unclothed, untaught, and uncared for, till nature matures

his faculties into instruments of crime? Nor need we have recourse to destinies so opposite as these, to study this most mysterious page of Nature's secrets. There is scarcely a domestic circle where we may not study it as well. In the same family we may compare the vigorous frame, and beautiful countenance, and brilliant intellect of one member, formed to win and to delight the world, with the awkward person, and doltish faculties, and sickly temperament of another, doomed to owe all things to the world's compassion; with no difference of merit, or of anything but what Providence has made in their formation. Philosophy finds reasons in their animal functions, in the physical temperament, or the organisation of the brain. But where is the reason of their reasons? Something must have guided Nature's hand in this unequal distribution. Few of us, I suppose, have lived to a thinking age, without frequently asking ourselves, when we come in contact with persons far removed in condition from ourselves, Why was my destiny not yours, and yours not mine?

There is but one solution — the absolute, unbiassed sovereignty of God; who owes no man anything, and may do what he will with his own. It is strange that those who on the plea of injustice make objection to the partial operation of God's electing grace, do not perceive that the same objection would be equally valid against every operation of his hand in creation and in providence. The charge of injustice is but one step removed, by saying that grace is equally bestowed on all, but its productiveness depends upon the soil it acts upon. What has made those soils so diverse? Birth, circumstance, example, education, habit, temperament, natural disposition and external influences;

the thousand things by which character is formed, without our own consent, at the absolute free disposal of Divine authority. Were it granted, that God gives his equal grace to all, could it be contended that he places all in an equal condition to receive it; and does no more for the spiritual regeneration of the child of pious parents, instructed in the scripture from his youth, than for that of the vagabond gipsy who never saw a Bible, and could not read it if he did, nor heard the name of God, except in impious oaths? It is a mysterious subject; but if it teaches us submission, and puts our reasoning pride to silence, it is not a useless one. There is but one equality. There is one way yet of bringing all men to a level, and placing them on equal terms before their Judge. Take from the best man all that he derived from his formation in his mother's womb, from the circumstances of his life, and the immediate influences of Heaven—all that he would not have been, had he been differently dispositioned, and differently bred, and differently influenced; and let the worst man subtract from his account all that would not have been in it, had he had the natural and providential advantages of the other, till nothing be left to either but what is wilfully his own, what he has been against conviction, and despite of means, or has not been by neglect of them—we shall come to something of a level then. Sin in preference and in principle will be man's equal basis, and all beside it will be ascribed to Him who oweth no man anything, but giveth to every one severally as He will. I may seem to have departed from my subject, by speaking of man's irresponsible condition in the world. Perhaps I shall be able presently to show that he is, in fact, responsible

for a great deal more of it than at first appears, since, before he strikes the balance with his destiny, he must add to his own account all the temptations, and disadvantages, and evil influences, to which he has unnecessarily exposed himself.

To return where we began. Christ Jesus was the only one who chose his own condition in the world, and his choice was adverse to all that human wisdom would have suggested. We should have said of him, as we say of ourselves, that an elevated station would afford the greater means of doing good. We should have thought a great deal about influence and opportunity, and the effect to be produced by a descent from princely greatness to a malefactor's grave; with all the contrast to be exhibited by the way, between the humility of his deportment and the dignity of his station. God judged otherwise—he has judged always otherwise. Whether to manifest that while the instrument is nothing, all power and all effect depend on the hand that wields it, or with intent to pour contempt on whatever seems great and glorious to us, he has never chosen the great things or the great ones of this world with which to do his work, even when they seemed the fittest for his purpose. What an effect, as we should think, would have been produced, had Jesus made the throne of the Roman empire the stepping-stone to the cross, and exhibited his passion and humiliation before the delegates of the universe assembled there, through whom the report would have gone forth to every nation under heaven! But this was not what he intended: he chose his birthplace in a tributary province, distinguished indeed above every other, but with a distinction nothing thought of in the world; and he chose it not in the capital of

that province, but in an inferior city ; and not amongst the great ones there, but with its meanest and most unknown. All that was striking, all that was remarkable in the Redeemer's birth, was supernatural. He deigned not to make any use of temporal signs to distinguish it from others, as if he were determined to derive no evidence of his greatness from the world, and to give it none but of a miraculous kind. Nor was it for himself alone, that Jesus chose poverty and meanness of condition. He chose the same for the companions and instruments of his work. He took his disciples from among the unknown ; not that he preferred the poor because they were poor—we must beware of erecting poverty into a merit, as has been done ere now—but he preferred poverty, because he knew it to be the state in which his followers could best subserve his Father's purposes. Doubtless, he who foreknew and forearranged the whole, had placed in that situation those he intended to select from it—a choice as little consonant with our ideas of what would have been best, as that which he made for himself ; because the sudden conversion of twelve persons of elevated station and distinguished talent would have produced a great sensation, tending much more directly, as it seems to us, to the evangelising of the world. But God never meant to evangelise the world: he meant to call for himself a people out of it by the workings of his grace, and to this little flock to give his kingdom. He meant to send the whispers of his still small voice throughout the earth, that whosoever would hear it might be saved ; but he would commend it to them by no factitious attractions, borrowed of this world's wisdom or its greatness. Our judgment in the first

instance is not unnatural, nor perhaps unreasonable, but it is a matter of surprise, that after so long experience that God judges otherwise, we should persist in attaching so much importance to great names and great means for the advancement of religion — still more, that they who acknowledge Christ as an example, should so frequently insinuate that evangelical principles are professed only by the weak and disesteemed of men, while persons of most name and influence in the Church are following in the broad way of charitable indifference. They will not remember, or will not believe, that as under the Jewish dispensation God chose for himself a people that were the 'fewest of all people,' so, under the Christian dispensation, the Scripture emblems of his Church are 'a fold,' 'a little flock.' It will be a glorious kingdom some time in characters of greatness becoming its eternal King. But that will be only at the restitution of all things, when the 'kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord.' Till then, learning, and wealth, and greatness, will never be on the Lord's side — meanness, ignorance, poverty, and simplicity, never will be evidences against the value of a religious profession. This by the way.

It is as individuals, each one for ourselves, that we are to be conformed to the image of our Lord. He chose poverty, he chose meanness of condition, he chose to be the least of all men. Who besides him does so? It may be said he chose it not of preference, but because it exposed him to the suffering which was the purpose of his coming. This is not true; an exalted station is an exposure to more danger than an obscure one, and wealth has never succeeded in buying off calamity. We know very well it is not true with us. The

toils we go through to obtain an eminence—the difficulties we contend with to maintain ourselves upon it, are ample proofs that it is not for ease or safety that we desire to rise. But who is of the mind of Christ? When we look upon the condition of our country at this moment, we may well repeat the question; for what has brought us to it but inordinate, proud, extravagant desires?—no matter whether for money, for rank, for influence, or under the more plausible but misused names of refinement and respectability—to be foremost, to be uppermost, to be most, to be more than our fathers were, and to push our children still above ourselves. God, in displeasure, surely, has gratified the proud desire to the utmost; the upward progress for a time was very rapid: all between the quite highest and the quite lowest class may contrast their fathers' *ménage* with their own, and the former of these may convict themselves of no less excess in what admitted of advance, though their position did not. But the reproof of Heaven is gone forth—would that it may prove in mercy!—'Go to, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you; your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten; your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you: they shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers, who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure upon the earth, and been wanton.' This is the text. If we want the comment we may hear it from every mouth in England. Poverty to the

rich, hunger to the full, debasement to the proud—children grown up in luxury, and made delicate by indulgence, reduced to penury, and left to the world's pity, or subjected by privations and indignities—most painful now, but which would have been no hardship had their fathers never risen. Who is of the mind of Christ? There would be a remedy even yet, if men believed that 'they are strangers and pilgrims upon earth'—travellers, whom it encumbers to have much to carry—sojourners, who have no abiding city here. This is what the Scripture says we are, but men do not think so. If they did, we should part from our superfluities with as little care as the young beauty puts off at night the gay attire of a festive evening, and, nothing less happy, nothing less beautiful, assumes in the morning her ordinary dress. We should descend with graceful ease from the station in which we were born, or to which we have been raised, to whatever level becomes our altered fortunes, gratefully satisfied to leave our children there. Again, the apostle James might supply the picture, but in what altered characters! 'Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.'

But the world is of quite another mind. Followers, so they profess, of Him who had not where to lay his head, they can find no place high enough for the repose of theirs. Worshippers, so they say, at the manger and the cross, no mansion is large enough, no acres broad enough, no tables so richly spread, as to suffice them. It will do for this year, but we must have more the next. A little while—a very little—and not that, if we begin not rather low—the gain adds something to

our innocent enjoyments, supplies a real want, removes a real inconvenience, serves a useful purpose, and increases our actual happiness, or would do so, if we could rest contented at that point. But desire grows with the increased possession; and unsatisfied desire is not happy anywhere. From that point forward, the agitating game is played for a most unworthy stake—our pride, our vanity, our sordid appetites, are the only winners. If our happiness is increased at all, it is by the gratification of passions and feelings, which it is our duty as Christians to subdue, and from which we pray daily to be delivered. Every creature is at liberty, nay, is required, to seek his own good; but if the great things of this world are the Christian's good, God is mistaken. He has abandoned them to his enemies, because they are not worthy of his friends—he has pronounced many a curse on them, but never once a blessing. Where is it written, Blessed are the rich, blessed are ye that are full? And Christ is mistaken: he did not choose great things for those that he loved; he did not ask wealth and honour of his Father for them when he left them; he never, that we know of, advanced the fortunes of any individual while on earth. Once when he saw a rich man whom he loved, he bade him part from all. And our Church, too, is mistaken, which requires that we take our children to the font, at their very entrance into life, to renounce 'the pomps and vanities of the world.' Are they mistaken, yourselves being judges, or is the delusion less than it appears? You, who through many a painful struggle, possibly through many a sin, have risen to consequence, do you look back with regret on younger days, when your name was an obscure one, and your home a simple

one, and your healthful spirit enjoyed as an indulgence all that exceeded your necessities? Or you, whose happiness is made up of opinion, of what men think of your condition, your style, your connexions, your importance —do you, when your company is gone, and your chamber-door is shut, think wishfully of those whose happiness is independent of opinion, who are too humble, or too simple, or too heavenly-minded, to care for the world's thinkings? I have some suspicion of it. There have been traitors even in Satan's kingdom, who have betrayed its secrets. But you say that you are Christ's, and live by his example; then I am sure you are not made happy by things which he despised.

It will be said, It is a needless question what we ought to choose, when we cannot choose at all. Our station in life is appointed by our Maker, and our subsequent fortunes are in his hands. But we must remember that a man's heart deviseth his way, though the Lord directeth his steps; and the state of his heart may be judged by his desires, whether they be prospered or defeated. There is much in our condition that is entirely of God, and not of the will of man. I wish it were that part with which we are best satisfied. If it be an exalted station, it would be as rebellious to descend from it, as it would be from a lower to aspire to it. If it be in abundance, it would be as ungrateful not to enjoy it, as to complain when we have it not. The chief who leads an army to the battle, the insignia of nobility about him, is not to doff his dangerous distinctions, and seek for safety in the rear. Every Christian should know, every one who is like-minded with his Lord does know, that distinctions are not desirable; and the more he has of them the better he knows it, whether they

be talents, wealth, or name. To such a one they are not a source of pride or exultation. I will say, for I believe it, that they are a source of humility and self-abasement. I believe a child of God, whose mind is as it should be, is never reminded of his powers or his possessions but his heart sinks within him under a sense of his unworthiness, and the deep responsibility that is upon him, testifying to himself, at least, that he did not choose it. Like most of the genuine traces of the Christian character, this is a hidden feature. He wears his honours, and uses his gifts, and men drop, as usual, their congratulations; but they cannot know with how different a sound they fall upon his ear, from that which they produce on others. God can alone distinguish, at such moments, between the inflated bosom, with its 'I thank thee' that I am gifted more than others, and the shrinking modesty that can only whisper 'Be merciful' to my inadequate return. Who but God would have known, had he not told it us, the different emotions of one royal bosom looking down from the ramparts of Babylon, and of another, when he asked, 'Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house?'

But our responsibility is greater than it at first appears. The circumstances of birth are much; and constitutional differences of character are much; and God overrules the current of our destiny. But from the moment of our entrance into life, other agency begins to work upon our fortunes. For a while it is the parents' responsibility, and the Christian parent does as much prove the likeness of his judgment to the judgment of his Lord, in the choice he makes for his children, as for himself; perhaps more, for he looks upon

life then with its tried value full before him, and should have added knowledge to his faith. The choice of the heavenly Father for his children, of the elder brother for his new-born brethren, is the pattern by which to regulate our desires for those whose fortunes are in a measure within our influence. And we should remember that, in the case of our children, we lose the commonest and, I think, the most valid pleas that are made use of to excuse our own inordinate desires. We plead for ourselves that habit is necessity, that to want what we are accustomed to, however artificial be the want, is an actual suffering; and however happy we might have been, if originally placed on a lower grade, it is reasonably painful to sink below those with whom we have stood equal. This is quite true; and our heavenly Father, who has appointed degrees and differences in the constitution of society, knoweth that we have need of these things, and is considerate of the pain we suffer in our privations; though it may be, and very often is, that cutting off of the right hand of a jealous tenaciousness, or casting away of the right eye of a fastidious delicacy, by which we are forcibly separated from our pride and earthliness for the sanctification of our souls. But when we look forward to the destiny of our new-born children, and begin to form their habits, and give a bias to their minds, and devise schemes for their future establishment, it is then that our value for the things of earth is freely manifested, whether or not we be like-minded with our Lord. It rests with us to save them from the very necessity we plead as an excuse for what our better principle condemns, by giving them simple habits, moderate desires, and a just estimate of what constitutes the greatness

and happiness of a child of God, of an heir of heaven in the days of his minority; choosing a station for them rather below than above what they might by possibility attain.

And then, how soon after our days of infancy are passed do our aspirings after this world's good begin to act upon our conduct! The god of this world has so brilliant a hierarchy, his votaries call things by such delusive names, and the things themselves are so inviting to the sense, inexperience would be at a loss to estimate their real value, had the Word of God not distinctly made it known. But the Word has made it known, and if we do not know it, it is because we will not receive the testimony of the Word. We have an example, and if we mistake, it is because we will not follow our example. It is a common saying, that men must buy their experience; and a truer one, that experience comes too late. But if they must, it is because they will believe nothing, even upon divine authority. Sufficiently credulous are they, notwithstanding, of the promises of him who is the father of lies. He disappoints them of the promised good, or disappoints them in it; but he can promise still, and they can still believe, and for the yet unsatisfied there is always another step on fortune's scale. The same temptation was offered to our Lord—'All these things will I give thee.' When the desire to be, or to have, arises in our hearts, do we deal with Nature's whisper as he with the suggestions of the tempter, by a reference to Scripture and the will of God? It tells us, 'He filleth the hungry with good things, and sendeth the rich empty away.' 'He putteth down the mighty from their seats, and exalteth the humble and meek.' It tells us, 'God

has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, and base things of the world, and things that are despised, hath God chosen, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.' With graphic clearness it places before our eyes the two extremes of human destiny, each one in possession of his own good things — doubtless the things that in his lifetime he esteemed most good. It shows us the first Adam in the height of prosperity, lord of all that he beheld, possessed of the world's good things, when they were good indeed, falling on the first temptation by desire for something more. And after him all who are moulded in his likeness. Lot exposing himself to the sin and to the doom of Sodom, because of the rich pastures and well-watered plains. Israel forgetting in their pleasant lands the lessons of their long adversity, Solomon, the Lord's anointed, corrupting himself, in possession, with the very greatness he had been once too wise to ask. The rich man leaving Christ, because he had too much of earth to leave for him. All men, as St. Paul expresses it, seeking their own, and not the things of Christ; exposing themselves to temptations, loading their consciences with sin, and piercing themselves through with many sorrows, because they will be rich, be great, be somebody, be something. On the other hand, the Scripture exhibits to us Christ, the second Adam, choosing lowliness as the fittest state in which to recover what the first in his plenitude had lost; to triumph in adversity, as he in prosperity had fallen; making himself the servant of all; and because he so humbled himself, God hath highly exalted him above every creature. And it shows us those who are

renewed after his likeness, doing all the same thing. Moses preferring adversity with the people of God, to the riches and royalty of Egypt; Abraham leaving all that he had to go out, he knew not whither; and those, of many of whom the world was not worthy, who held its greatness for nothing, and its wealth for dross, 'confessing they were strangers and pilgrims on earth.'

There has been seen from that time forward the likeness of both—in the likeness of one or the other all men must be found. There are the rich and the poor, the prosperous and the afflicted, the high-born and the base, the rising and the sinking; but the line that separates these, though it were better defined than it is, could never separate the image of the first Adam from the image of the second, the lowly from the proud, the earth-renouncing from the earth-aspiring. There is a line visible from the heights of heaven, whether we upon earth can distinguish it or not. On one side of it are those who, be they what they may, would still be something more, or seem to be something that they are not; who cannot enjoy what they have because their desires exceed it, and cannot be grateful because they are not satisfied. There are those who are ashamed of a position which their Master chose, or proud of one which he refused to occupy; and, in spite of all God's declarations to the contrary, persist in accounting the proud happy, and their end honourable. These are all who, by their language when they cannot act, and by their actions when they can, by the dreams of their heads upon their pillows, and the devices of their hearts at midnight, evince to their Maker that they are not of his mind, nor of the mind of him who chose to be the least: and in spite of

his word, and in spite of his example, and in spite very often of their own bitter experience, are resolved to pursue after, or, if they can do no more, to long after, the things that the world calls *great*. On the other side this line of separation there are some, born indeed in the similitude of Adam, but changed by grace into the image and spirit of Christ. They have not changed their station, they are not at liberty to do so, unless God does it for them; but they have changed their mind. They have broken the scale by which this world's good was measured, and taken the word of God to measure it by instead. Their vain imaginings have ceased, and the devices of their hearts are changed. The grasping hand is unloosed: the heart lets go its hold; the foot of pursuit is slackened. If there are none who have come to the full mind of Christ, which I cannot say there are not, that it is best to be least, and safest to be last, and happiest to be nothing, there are many who are hastening towards it, having more fear of than value for the world's distinctions, do not admire them, do not seek them, would rather not have them. But he is bold, who ventures to say it in the world's presence — followers all of Christ, and led, as they say, by his example, but so much astonished at a semblance of his spirit, or an echo of his words, that there is small chance of escaping an incredulous laugh or a contemptuous sneer. Reason, too, as usual, has a word to say; it talks of the increased power of doing good. That were a good motive, if it were a true one: but our hearts deceive us if we think so. Before we desire more means of doing good, we must be sure we have done all the good possible with the means we have. Till then, a righteous spirit will shrink from the in-

creased responsibility. And then, be it remembered, that Jesus was not of this mind: he neither chose to be great nor to be rich, in order to do good; neither did he choose wealth or greatness for his instruments.

It is said that our position is not like Christ's. He was God, and could not want means to do his good. It is not to be supposed that he who had been partner of the Father's throne should value the distinctions of this poor world. There is something almost ridiculous in the supposition. What should the Lord of glory want with the honours and pride of this life? The thought seems absurd — it is absurd; but what miserable pretenders then are we! How does our unbelief betray itself! Are not we, too, the heirs of celestial glory? Are we not expectants of a heavenly crown? Are we not preparing, in as short a space as he was, for a destiny so great, so blessed, that in comparison with it the distinctions and possessions of this world are really no more to us than they were to him? Are not we likewise sons and daughters of the Most High, too great to be exalted or debased by any condition here, or any thoughts that men may have of us? We say so, but surely such arguments belie our faith.

One word before I close, with reference to the commencement of this chapter. Our Creator has distributed his gifts unequally: as the distribution affects this life, there is so much to counterbalance what seems the good and evil of each condition, the amount is perhaps less unequal than it seems; and whatever it is, life is so short it does not signify. But there are circumstances which seem to influence our future destiny; and it is impossible to deny that our spiritual advantages are unequal. Let no man enter into controversy

with his Maker. 'Let not the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?' He owes no man anything; what he gives is no debt; what he withholds is no robbery. But before we measure this inequality, and calculate the proportion of our spiritual advantages, there is a long account to cast, which will greatly affect the balance, and bring upon ourselves the responsibility we are so willing to lay upon our Maker. If by choosing for ourselves and ours, otherwise than Christ chose for himself and his, with his example before us, and his word in our hands, we have brought ourselves into temptation, exposed ourselves to evil influences, or deprived ourselves of spiritual opportunity, the responsibility is wholly ours. We can bring no charge against our circumstances, nor impeach the dispensations of Providence.

CHAPTER VI.

IN HIS SORROWS.

'Take up the cross and follow me.'—Mark, x. 21.

'MAN that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.' 'All his days are sorrows, and his travail grief.' 'Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.' This is a fact which no one can deny, with the only explanation that ever has been given. No one can deny the fact: and if they deny the explanation, they can substitute no other in its stead. Infidelity may reject, and folly may despise the narrative of the fall, and treat affliction as if it came forth of the dust, and sorrow as if it sprang out of the ground; but no man has attempted to deny that he is born to sorrow as the sparks fly upward. What is the history of the world but a continued comment on this primeval curse? From Jacob, who, in the simplicity of patriarchal life, looked back upon his years, and found them few and evil, to the king of Israel, who, in the plenitude of luxury and knowledge, declared there was nothing but sorrow under the sun; from the secret complaint of the captive, obscurely carved upon

his prison walls, to the suicidal stroke of the hero that becomes an item in the tables of chronology; what is the history of man but a development of this bad beginning? In every chronicler's story — in every poet's song — in every philosopher's argument, sorrow is the longest and most interesting chapter, for it is that which finds a response in every human bosom. And the world has subsisted now six thousand years, and man has found no remedy; the sentence is not remitted — his sorrows are not diminished. Experience has perfected his faculties and increased his powers — a thousand inventions and discoveries have added to his natural capabilities; improvements of every kind — the growth of arts — the increase of knowledge — the experience of accumulated ages — all is indicative of progress to the present time; in one thing only there is no progression — man has found no defence, no security from sorrow; every new source of enjoyment has opened a fresh inlet of suffering to the heart, but never a weapon to defend the entry. Parents still see their children break their hearts and die. Children still see the grey hairs of their parents brought with sorrow to the grave. The most gifted, the most admired of men, still rush desperately into eternity, because they cannot bear the weight of misery that is upon them. Never, perhaps, was there so much suffering in the world as at the present time, when contrivance has exhausted itself to increase our means and powers of enjoyment. We 'go out one way against the enemy, and flee before him seven ways.' The art that removes one danger introduces another; science outroots an old disease, and a new one takes its place. 'That which the palmer-worm hath left, hath the locust eaten; and that which

the locust hath left, hath the canker-worm eaten; and that which the canker-worm hath left, hath the caterpillar eaten.' Man may turn the current of his sorrows, but he cannot lessen them. And when we consider this, together with the extraordinary powers over nature which he seems to possess, there is no way of understanding it, the researches of philosophy, the observation of ages, have found no way of accounting for it, but by those revealed words: 'In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.' We may say to the unbeliever, If it is not so, how is it? And if he were honest, he would own his mouth is closed. He who pronounces the curse can alone explain it; and no remedy can be found for it but that which has proceeded whence the curse was issued: none has prevailed to lighten it but he who laid it on.

Of the cup thus filled for all men, there was one who drank so much more deeply than the rest, that he has been emphatically called 'the man of sorrows,' as if there were no other. 'His face was more marred than any man's.' 'He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.' 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation? for he was

cut off out of the land of the living.' Born under the curse and imputation of sin, the Son of God was made liable to every sorrow to which sin has subjected us, except the consciousness of having committed it, and the pain proceeding from its actual commission. These, it is evident, he could not feel. The writhing of wounded pride, the yearnings of unsatisfied ambition, the blank of bereaved idolatry, the bitterness of remorse, and the chill of deserved shame—these and the thousand scorpion stings with which sin torments the bosom it inhabits, a pure and holy Being could not feel. Do they whose draughts of bitterness are thus compounded, believe it is the Saviour's cup they drink of? As Christ was man, everything that is innocently gratifying to human sense must have been gratifying to his, and the privation of it consequently painful, had these things not been rendered indifferent to him by the nobler occupations of his spirit. In reference to the demands of nature, he explains his indifference thus:—'My meat and drink is to do the will of him that sent me.' So in respect of those feelings to which, by the very perfection of his humanity, he must have been liable, he could not be insensible to the ties of natural affection—that would have been an imperfection in his human character; when, therefore, he disowns those best feelings of our nature, and asks, 'Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?' he thus explains himself: the stronger tie that bound him to the spiritual family of his Father in heaven, absorbed and superseded his natural attachments, and placed him beyond the reach of those sorrows that result from our earthly connexions. At least there is no mention in scripture of his having suffered any such. And though

these are legitimate sufferings to us, the more our affections are detached from earth, as his were, the less we are exposed to suffer from them.

Excepting his fast in the wilderness, we are not told to what corporeal sufferings Jesus was exposed previous to his condemnation to a painful death. In all beings the capability of suffering seems proportioned to the other powers. From the bare sensation of the scarcely living zoophyte, through the rising gradations of animal existence, to the acute perceptions of man; and from man, animalised, unrefined, uneducated, to the intense sensibilities of the most exalted natures; the power to suffer keeps pace, I believe, with the mental capacity. By what measure, then, can we calculate the sufferings of our Lord? As much greater than those of any mere mortal could be under like circumstances, as his nature was more exalted and refined. How much they were still further increased by the connexion of that nature with Deity, we can still less estimate. He had only common language to express it in, and that was insufficient. It says all it can say indicative of the bodily suffering that attends on mental anguish. 'I am poured out like water; all my bones are out of joint.' 'My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws.'

Bodily sufferings, which form so large a portion of the primeval curse upon our race, can have no connexion, in themselves, with our conformity to the image of Christ. As expiatory, they are useless: his only could atone for sin. As voluntary, they are not required at our hands. As laid on us by Providence in judgment or in mercy, it is neither sinful to feel nor meritorious to endure them. Any conformity to our Lord's example

required of us in respect of these, must be sought for in the spirit with which they are received and borne; with reference to which we may observe, that these were not the sorrows Jesus felt the most. He makes but little complaint of them, and that little was between himself and God: in the gospel narrative there is none.

Twice in the narrative of Jesus' life, we are told by those who saw him, that he wept. Observe the occasion of his tears: at neither time did he shed them for himself. The one occasion (John, xii. 35) exhibits the exquisite sympathy, the extreme sensitiveness with which Jesus regards the sorrows of his people. He knew the mourning of that beloved family would soon be turned into joy. He knew what he was about to do. But they did not know; and his sensibility yielded to the impression of their transient sorrow. A beautiful representation of what he is in heaven; touched with the feeling of our infirmities, while he delays to remove them—mourning with us, while he waits to be gracious—sharing every present sorrow, while preparing to change it into everlasting joy.

On another occasion (Luke, xix. 41) Jesus looked upon Jerusalem and wept—not for her calamities then, but for her sins. There were sickness, and want, and misery, in her streets, and he had shown no slowness to relieve them; but it was not for these he wept, it was for the iniquity of his people. As in another place it is written, 'Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy laws.' These were not selfish mournings. His own sorrows were kept for his own bosom, or poured in secret into his Father's ear; we find no expression of them to those about him till the time of his latest agony. In the secret outpourings of

his holy soul, we read at once the depth and the character of his sufferings; externally, they may seem no more than other men's: the secret of their intenseness was within; in the purity and exaltation of the soul that was to bear them—in the spiritual nature of his inflictions, and their undeservedness, so abhorrent to his high and holy nature—in the mental anguish of imputed sin and divine abandonment—in that power of unlimited suffering derived from his own infinity: these were the hidden depths of the Redeemer's sorrow. Men think lightly of it, because they think lightly of him. They think of him only as a man; other men have been scorned and buffeted—other men have been tortured and put to death unjustly—martyrs have been seen to bear as much as this;—or they think of him only as God, deriving from his deity such support as left him little more than a fictitious rehearsal of sorrow he was too great to feel. How false an estimate! His pure manhood made him susceptible of the faintest touch of evil, to which the noblest natures must ever be the most averse: his Godhead made him capable of suffering it to an infinite extent. In finite being, suffering has a limit—a limit that has been reached, but never passed. Men have touched the point at either end, where sorrow ceased to be painful, and joy ceased to be enjoyed, because it exceeded their capacity to feel: as objects approaching the eye too nearly, by their very magnitude become invisible. The man Christ Jesus only had an unlimited power to feel and capability to endure, that his sufferings might be sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world. No one can enter into the nature of his passion but those who know what spiritual sorrows are—the greatness of it none can estimate. It

is in the former only his people can resemble him: let us consider it in his own words.

'My God, my God, look upon me: why hast thou forsaken me, and art so far from my health, and from the words of my complaint? O my God, I cry in the daytime, and thou hearest not: and in the night season also I take no rest. And thou continuest holy, O thou worship of Israel. Our fathers hoped in thee. They trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them. They called upon thee, and were holpen. They put their trust in thee, and were not confounded. But as for me, I am a worm and no man: a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying, He trusted in God that he would deliver him: let him deliver him if he will have him. O go not far from me, for trouble is nigh at hand, and there is none to help me.' Such language needs no comment —it admits of none. If we have experienced what it is to feel as if forsaken of God when we have put our whole trust in him: to cry day and night to him, and receive no answer; to remember how others have been helped when they prayed, while we remain confounded: to be abandoned, perhaps taunted, by those who should have given us support, and triumphed over by Satan and our spiritual enemies, exulting in our seeming abandonment; nature sinking, the strength failing, the body wasting upon the rack of mental anguish!—if we have felt this, we may perhaps conceive—no, it is not possible, mere mortality can form no idea of the agonies of that holy Being in his time of separation and abandonment. Every kind of sorrow had been accumulated upon his head—his enemies were triumphing

around him—his own people were bringing the curse of his blood upon themselves and their children; of those who had been his familiar friends, witnesses of all his works that he had done, one had betrayed him, and one denied him, and the rest had forsaken him and fled. All this had drawn no audible complaining from his lips. One anguish only was too much to be suppressed —'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' When it came to that, there was nothing to be added —sorrow had reached its utmost—the expiation was perfected. He said, 'It is finished,' and departed.

Has conscience spoken while we read? Has memory flown back through all our days of sorrow, and numbered our bygone tears to find how many of them fell for causes such as these?—how many for man's destruction?—how many for God's outraged laws and his averted countenance?—how many for our sins? Christ requires those who would come after him, to take up their cross and follow him. St. Paul speaks of believers as 'planted together in the likeness of his death;' and of himself he says, 'That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death;' and St. Peter, 'Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.' And again, 'Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example.' And God has promised that if we suffer we shall also reign with him.

Respecting this sorrow which characterises the people of God, begetting in them a feature of likeness to their blessed Lord, there have been many and great

mistakes; but this cannot abrogate the word of God, that there should be no such thing, or that it should not be required of his people. It is not for man's perversions to deprive the word of God of meaning, and leave it an empty letter. From the Papist who subjects himself to inflictions God has not imposed, in order to expiate his sins or earn rewards in heaven, to the Protestant who vaguely fancies that what he is made to suffer here is at least subtracted from his punishment hereafter, the Scripture has been many ways perverted on this point. It makes one shrink to hear thoughtless people say, 'This thing or that thing is my cross,' 'We have all our cross.' No, we have not all a cross; if we had, we should all hereafter have a crown. Your curse it may be, but it is not your cross, unless it be suffered in Christ Jesus. The sorrows of a natural man are a part of, and not instead of, that primeval curse, and must remain a curse in all their progress, as well as in their issue, unless redeeming grace convert the whole to good, making of the sorrow a blessing, and of the curse a cross indeed, though not a meritorious one. No one's can be that but the Son of God's: for his only was voluntary, undeserved, and unalloyed with evil. If there is one sin outstanding in the book of God against us, of which his suffering has not purchased the remission, no suffering of ours will ever blot it out. If there is one eternal blessing not already purchased for us by his passion, no endurance of ours will ever buy it. It is for a quite different purpose we are to be conformed to the likeness of his death.

There are two distinct sources, then, of human sorrow—the curse of Adam and the cross of Christ. Jesus bore them both. If we are his people we must

bear them both — the one because we bear the image of the earthly Adam, the other because we must also bear the image of the heavenly: the one in fellowship with all mankind, the other in union with the members of Christ's mystical body, the church militant upon earth. But we must not mistake them. In the world generally, men sorrow after the similitude of Adam, not after the similitude of Christ. This St. Paul signifies, when he says, 'The sorrow of the world worketh death.' (2 Cor. vii. 10.) Some suffering we all have; it would be good for us to compare it with the sufferings of our Lord. If we are still the victims of the curse — still dying that miserable death the apostle speaks of, it would be well to be aware of our condition. If we have exchanged it for that 'godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation,' we shall not find reason to regard it with feelings of self-complacency, as something propitiatory in the eyes of God.

The springs of natural sorrow are so numberless, so inexplicable, it is impossible to lay them open. And when the origin is the same, the streams flow so diverse through each separate bosom, no man is competent to unfold another's woe. There are what are called external ills, such as the loss of property, the tearing asunder of domestic ties, sickness, poverty, disgrace, and injury, and a thousand more, which most men can appreciate. But beneath all these, more deeply buried and more deeply felt, unknown and unappreciated, are the individual sorrows of each separate bosom. We cannot reach them; perhaps we could not understand them if we did. 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness.' To the heart therefore we commit it, of each one in particular, to examine the source and character of his

own sorrows, and compare them with those of our Lord. We can but speak generally—conscience must make the application. In this general view how much of earthly suffering must be marked off at once, as the offspring of wilful and indulged sin! There is the voluptuary's sorrow for his ruined health; the gamester's sorrow for his wasted fortunes; the swindler's sorrow in his detected frauds: the tyrant's sorrow in defeat and deposition; with the thousand lesser penalties that follow lesser crimes. And then there are the stirrings of ungodly passions, when roused by external crimes, to be the torment of the bosom they inhabit. Self-love, ambition, avarice, pride, resentment—what a host! any one of which, wounded by an adverse weapon from without, can put the soul to torture. It is needless to say these pangs of unrepented sin are not our cross: the stamping of the curse is plain upon them: there were none like them in the Saviour's bosom. That sentence which passed over the natural soil, fell doubly heavy on the soil within us. Thorns and briers has it borne from thence till now: grace may root them out, but cannot change their fruits. Jesus felt them when they were gathered to bind about his brow, but they never grew in his own holy bosom.

Of natural sorrow there is besides an incalculable sum, not brought upon us by our personal sins. It is the consequence and the desert of sin, as every evil is, but it would not be on that account unlike to Christ's: for his was the desert and consequence of sin imputed to him. And yet it forms no portion of our cross. Sorrow for the privation of some earthly good, or the blighting of some earthly expectation—sorrow from sympathy with the temporal ills of others—from the

unkindness of earthly friends, or injuries that cannot reach beyond the grave, or any other that has earth for its source, and earth for its object, and earth for its termination. These are legitimate sorrows; they come from God: they are the fulfilling of his revealed purpose—'in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.' These are the things of which Solomon says that one event happeneth to the just and the unjust. These it is not sinful to suffer or to feel, but they are essentially of earth. One who denies his Saviour and defies his God, must likewise share them, so that they can be no evidence of our union with Christ. They are not suffered for his sake, or occasioned by our love of him, or of the Father, by care for the souls of others or our own. There needs a great and mysterious change to convert these natural sorrows into the cross of Christ. Some of them he did indeed endure: but the bitterness that is in them may differ in character while the source appears the same. When Jesus speaks of enemies, he complains of them as the enemies of his soul; when of injuries, it is of the outrages committed on his Father's laws; when of insults, it is as offered to the Deity manifested in him. Whether mourning for the griefs of others, or his own, it is the thought of sin that gives bitterness to his complaint. They who have drunk deep of this world's sorrow, know whether there has been any such ingredient in the cup—whether it has been aggravated by one such thought, embittered by one such feeling. It may have been so. We may in time of trial have been more jealous for God's honour than our own—more watchful of our spiritual than our temporal safety—and more sorry for the sin of the evil-doers, than for the wrong inflicted on ourselves.

Spiritual sorrows may, in a greater or less degree, have mixed with our earthly ones, and given them a diviner character; so that in them, though not by them, we have borne the image of our Lord.

I can suppose that many an honest mind, not wishing to be deceived or take its dross for gold, is doubting at this moment where the similitude is to be looked for, whether it really exists, in any human bosom. They know many excellent and, as they think, religious men, whom they never heard to complain of other griefs than are common to all mankind, which yet we have shown to bear little resemblance to the cross of Christ; surely it is in vain to look for conformity anywhere if such men have it not. To every honest mind that reasons thus we may reply, 'Let God be true, and every man a liar;' the witness of God's word must be taken against the testimony of the best of men, if they should be found in opposition. And the language of the Scriptures upon this point is peculiarly strong. They speak of being crucified with Christ—of dying with him—of being buried with him. This cannot be otherwise understood than as requiring a conformity to his suffering in the character of our own. A literal crucifixion is not to be supposed. A few persons there have been appointed thereto, and we fancy it less difficult to trace in these the required conformity. But by no means is it exclusively, or even prominently, manifested by acts of martyrdom. It is the spirit and the motive only that makes these a cross; for a man may give his body to be burned, and yet be nothing; and the same spirit and motive will impart a like character to every other suffering. But as these were not the ills of which the Man of sorrows most complained,

so neither are they the severest his people bear in union with him. When Paul was in prison and in chains he sang; when he wept, and 'mourned in spirit,' and 'was grieved,' it was for very different causes.

The days of martyrdom are passed. Not so the word of God. The requirements of his Gospel and the fruits of his Spirit are not changed. Wherever there is a heart that is his, there the restoring of Christ's image is begun; and faint and insufficient as the traces are, there is the likeness of his own grief. If we could lay open the believer's bosom to the world, this would be at once apparent. They would find it occupied with sorrow so unlike their own, so like their Saviour's, they might despise them both, but could not deny they were the same. This we cannot do; and language can ill convey ideas of unknown feeling. It must wait that 'manifestation of the sons of God,' perhaps not very distant, when every member of his family will be recognised by features of resemblance, obscured and mistaken here. The child of God need not be too careful to prove his pretensions now; he should be careful rather of this — are they there? They must exist, or they never can be manifested; they cannot be acquired in the grave, neither in heaven.

The greatest affliction Jesus knew was the privation of God's presence,—'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' It is so to the believer. When he has once perceived the delight of spiritual communion with his Maker, and the shining of God's countenance upon his soul, the loss of it is insupportable; his spirit can take no rest,—he walks as in midnight darkness. 'He seeks him on the right hand, and he is not there; on the left, where he doth work, but cannot

find him.' He may know what has provoked his Father to withdraw, or he may not. Perhaps he doubts if he will return, or perhaps he does not. It is all the same,—Jesus knew all, yet he could not endure the absence. Neither can the believer; he may hold fast his faith, and yet be more intensely miserable than any earthly loss could make him; a misery proportioned to his love and past experience of God's presence,—small in degree, therefore, compared with Christ's; but still the same in kind. 'Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.' 'There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger.' 'I cried unto thee, and thou didst not hear; I called unto thee, and thou didst not answer.' 'Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest thou thyself in the time of trouble?' 'I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me?' This was the language of Christ, and it is that of his people in seasons of spiritual darkness. It is no overwrought effusion of the psalmist's muse. It is not, as it seems to be to those that never felt it, the conventional language attached to a certain profession of religion. It is what passes in secret between every true believer and his God. Unconnected with, as it is unlike to, every earthly sorrow, it may be suffered amid the abundance of this world's good, impotent to shed one ray of comfort upon the mourning spirit. All earth is nothing—all heaven itself would be nothing to the child of God without the presence of his Father, when he has once discovered what it is. Perhaps some will ask, Does God really forsake his people? Are not these sufferings an evidence of the weakness of our faith?

It matters little to the anguish of them how they

are produced; and come whence they may, none but a child of God can feel them, for none but he will ever miss his Father. But I think they are not a proof of want of faith. They originate, I conceive, in some defection on our part—some coldness of devotion or carelessness of life—some voluntary exposure to temptation and ungodly influence, neglect of spiritual exercises, or undue compromise with the world. By such means God is provoked to withdraw his countenance from us for a season, that we may feel our misery and be reproved. But in the season of darkness that ensues, when in anguish of spirit we seek God and cannot find him, faith may be very strong—stronger, perhaps, than at any moment of our lives. Never is it put to so severe a proof as when, without any consciousness of God's presence, or sensible enjoyment of his love, we still trust him—still confidently call him Father. In such an hour as this, the triumph of our Redeemer's faith was perfected. Why should that prove the weakness of our faith which proved the strength of his? Let not the suffering believer think so. If we did not love him we should not miss him; if we did not believe in him we should not cry after him. The return of such seasons, when we have tried their bitterness, will ever be our greatest dread, but they should bring with them no despondency, and in the remembrance of them there is much encouragement. In paths so dark as these, there is yet light enough to trace the Redeemer's steps, where he has trodden before us.

Second only to this sorrow is the contact and the weight of sin. Between Christ and his people there is a difference here, but there is a likeness also. Jesus bore the unexpiated sins of the whole world; the curse

yet remaining in them — the penalty unpaid—the guilt unpardoned. We feel the burden of indwelling sin, but without the penalty,—without the curse. It is the weight of pardoned sin we feel. It is difficult to conceive what it would be to bear even one sin in the manner that he bore the whole. Yet is our likeness to him in this sorrow a very prominent mark of a regenerate character; for, as sin was his greatest enemy, so is it ours,—the object of our dread and our abhorrence, 'the remembrance of it is grievous to us, the burthen is intolerable.' This is strong language, uttered by thousands who never felt a sorrow of the kind. But it is not too strong to express that anguish of spirit which has drawn bitterest tears from eyes that would have looked calmly on the martyr's fire. 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' It was not the death of approaching martyrdom at Rome that drew this cry from Paul. Nor was it the fear of everlasting death, for Paul knew he had eternal life in Christ who bought him. It was the death of present sin, the body of corruption that he bore about him,—that conscious, living death. The approved disciple of Christ has no fears of punishment hereafter; he knows no record of his sins is kept in heaven, as certainly as if he had seen the hand of mercy blot them from the book, for God has told him so. But still, under the sense of those forgiven sins, he can feel a sorrow more intense than anything in this world can inflict. Many a living saint, as well as many a departed martyr, in whose cross every kind of infliction has been mingled, can testify that this was the bitterest draught of all. 'Mine iniquities have taken such hold upon me, I am not able to look up;

they are more in number than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me.' 'My life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing; my strength faileth because of mine iniquities.' 'Mine iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burthen they are too heavy for me.' This is not exaggeration; language is incompetent to exaggerate what it is insufficient to express. It is not the prescribed ceremony of public confession; it is the converse of the secret chamber, the cry of the soul at midnight,—'All the night long wash I my couch with my tears.' I suppose I need say nothing to convince an ungodly world that they have never felt such sorrow. Something painful they may now and then feel with reference to the future, when it passes like a spectre before their eyes, pointing to the record of the past, but it is dread of the punishment, not of the sin; let that be stifled, and all is well again. Fear is not sorrow. The cry of almost frantic agony that has been, in some extreme cases, heard from the death-bed of the profligate, when conviction has seized upon him too late to repent but too soon to die in peace, is indeed the cry, the foreboding cry, of that eternal sorrow of which remorse will be the severest torture. It is the concentrated terror of the unrepealed curse, wilfully accumulated in despite of mercy. But generally where the life has not been vicious, the natural man has no foretasting of eternal sorrow; the stirrings of occasional fear upon the conscience bring no repentance and leave no remorse; the joys and sorrows of this life engross the entire feelings; and men die for the most part as they live, without shedding a single tear at the thought of the sins they have committed. Are such disposed to think the strong language of the

Psalmist, and other penitents, belongs only to the lips of the gross transgressor, who has stained his conscience with peculiar vices, and is really what he calls himself, the chief of sinners? If this in some cases should be so, his sorrow is more like his Saviour's sorrow still than theirs is; he is only in the case of him who 'went down justified rather than the other.' But more frequently it is otherwise. The expression, as well as the consciousness of sin, is generally strongest in the holiest bosom. It becomes more vivid as our state improves. Every fresh beam of light and truth that shines into the believer's soul, shows him to himself in darker colours; sin grows more hateful as he grows more holy, and the sense of it more painful as Christ becomes more dear. Sorrow for sin and love for Christ must live and grow in equal measure; a cold repentance will beget but feeble love, and a faint love will beget but little grief for that which afflicted him and grieves his Holy Spirit. It might well be asked, 'Which thinkest thou will love him most?' Nature could answer that; and experience answers it every day before our eyes. To them who have no deep and abiding sense of sin, who think little of it and care little about it,—treat it rather as a misfortune than a fault, a hereditary disease entailed upon them by their father's fall, an evil that necessity excuses, and God forgives, and death will remedy: is Christ really precious? Do they love the mention of his name? Do they make it very prominent in their devotion, and like to have it made very prominent in every question or discourse about religion? I believe not. What, indeed, is that line of demarcation called by so many names, defined so many ways, that separates

in profession the evangelical members of the Church from the Church at large? They may differ more or less in other doctrines from each other and among themselves, but in this they are universally and irreconcilably separate. The thoughtless of the larger class do not consider, and the more considerate do not believe, that nature is entirely corrupt, and sin so deadly an enemy. They admit its existence in an ameliorated state, modified by the washing of baptism, and the diffusion of universal grace. They neither feel practically, nor know theoretically, the depth of their iniquities, or what the Scriptures call 'the exceeding sinfulness of sin.' By a deficient perception in this, their whole system of religion is affected. They think of Christ as the originating cause of this amelioration, and so far accept and value his atonement; but for present help, for refuge from actual danger, as the Saviour of them that are about to perish, he is not much thought of by them; they have no consciousness of being about to perish. Consequently there is no frequent mention of Christ in their discourses — no ardent desires for an interest in his precious blood — no intenseness of affection for him in their hearts. He might say to them, as he said to one of old at whose table he sat an undistinguished guest, 'I entered into thine house; my head with oil thou didst not anoint; thou gavest me no kiss.' Hence, also, originates a deficient appreciation of the Spirit's work. They deny, or hold for little, the conversion of heart, the renewal to righteousness, the change from a state of nature to a state of grace, because they do not know that they require it. But this fundamental deficiency affects the conduct as it affects the principles. They have less

susceptibility of sin in the commission or the contact. They can walk in its neighbourhood with a less timid step, and look upon it with a steadier eye. It is no woe to them to dwell in the tents of Kedar, and have their habitations in the dwellings of Mesech. Their ignorance of the real nature of sin renders their perception of it so obtuse, they cannot detect it in its more specious forms, and they expose themselves with most unholy courage to its influence. They play with it as the idiot with a weapon of which he never felt the edge. The believer does not so. He fears sin as he fears not anything beside; because the sorrow it causes him is greater than any other sorrow. He flies from it as from a baleful pestilence. He may, in the fine sensibility experience of its bitterness has given,—he may sometimes even fancy it where it is not. But he errs on the right side. Blessed are they that so mourn, for they shall be comforted. The Father loveth a broken and a contrite spirit. The Son remembers with tenderest sympathy his deep participation in such sorrow, when he who knew no sin was made sin for us, and sank beneath this burthen. The Holy Spirit has his peculiar dwelling-place with them that are of a contrite heart. It is true that Satan takes advantage of moments of weakness in our faith to mix fear with this godly sorrow, and makes us mistake for a mark of reprobation this strongest evidence of our acceptance with God. If he is permitted to succeed in the delusion, the anguish becomes too much for human sufferance. The sense of sin, without an equal sense of redeeming love, has sometimes overthrown the intellect of the sufferer; and where Christ is fully known, if the faith be weak, it sometimes produces a season of morbid

despondency. But though 'sorrow may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning.' While the heart thus learns to loathe itself, the Saviour becomes more precious; the sorrow and the love grow on together; one may for a season be forgotten in the other, but it is on the increase meantime, and will manifest itself presently. Even in the darkest hours of such mourning the believer may find comfort, if he can remember that his sorrow resembles the sorrow of his Lord; it is that which the apostle contrasts with the death-working sorrow of the world,—that which 'worketh repentance to salvation.'

From this improved sensibility to the nature and the consequence of sin arises another feature of the divine character, another grief that assimilates the believer with his Lord:—the pain he feels in contemplation of another's sins—arising from two sources, the sinner's danger, and God's insulted majesty. What this trial must have been to the pure and compassionate Jesus, is not for us to estimate. We know it becomes more painful to ourselves in proportion to the increase of our love to God, our delight in his law, desire for his glory, and belief in his written word. Mark the indifference of the world to sin, when it does not invade the peace of society. Observe the lightness with which things most offensive to God and destructive of the souls of men, are spoken of in society. Who feels any sorrow for God's dishonoured law, and man's eternal misery enhanced? Not they who can amuse themselves in scenes of vice, on the cold plea that it does themselves no harm. Nor those who can laugh at the ungodly jest, and enjoy the mirth of sinners, content with abstaining from their worst practices. Such was

not the mind of Christ. He complains more bitterly of the dishonour done to God, than of any insult offered to himself: and while he groaned beneath the imputed sins of those who, accepting his atonement, would be saved, he had tears too for those who, rejecting it, would perish. It is interesting to watch the growth of this feature in the character of God's people. How gradually they become distressed by customs and practices, in which they sometimes saw no harm! How painful it becomes to them to associate with the ungodly! what a jealous susceptibility grows up in them of anything that seems to affect the glory of God, and do dishonour to his name! Pleasure ceases to be pleasure, if it brings them in contact with sin; and among their severest trials is the difficulty of avoiding such contact in the necessary business of life. What natural benevolence feels for the sufferings of mankind, is surpassed by what the renewed spirit feels in contemplation of their vices. Like Lot, when he abode in Sodom, the child of God vexes his holy soul from day to day with the ungodly deeds that are committed around him, till he is ready to exclaim with David, 'Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy laws.' And what power has language to describe the father's, the brother's, the husband's sorrow, while watching the ungodly course of those they love,—their accumulation of unrepented sin, their obstinate resistance of God's warnings, their perverse requital of redeeming love, and the wrath gathered up against the day of wrath upon a head beloved! And this beheld with the eye of faith, as sure of the destruction of God's enemies, as of the salvation of his people. It was with such sorrow that Jes- - - -

upon Jerusalem, the beloved city. Should not his people feel it? There is one difference, indeed, between our sorrow for our beloved, and his; if it were not so, it would be more than our weakness could endure. We have hope and prayer, and all the encouraging offers of the gospel, protracted to the latest moment of their day of grace. Jesus knew the day of grace was ended, and the ruin of his people irretrievable. No sorrow can be like unto his sorrow, whencesoever it arise; but many and bitter are the tears of the righteous from this cause, shed before Heaven with groanings that cannot be uttered. The like anguish they never suffered for themselves. It could not be, because they never saw their own corruption by the light of divine grace, till grace had removed the consequences; they never fully knew their danger, till they had found refuge in Christ. St. Paul knew the measure of this sorrow, when he 'could have wished that himself were accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh.' Moses knew, when he exclaimed, 'Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written.' Many others of God's people have as deeply partaken of this bitterness; none, perhaps, are entirely exempted from it. Of the world I need not ask if they have felt it. Jerusalem wept not for herself, nor for her children. They stop not even to consider how much of the sin they witness they may have contributed to cause; how many of their dependants they have led into transgression of God's laws; how many of their children they have led to the shrine of Mammon, after devoting them in baptism to the Lord. They shed no tears at night for the encouragement each has given to the other

through the day, by their unhallowed levity, to keep God out of mind, perhaps to defeat the workings of his Spirit by sneers and jestings. Are these they who talk of Christ's example and the morality of the gospel? Did Jesus so?

'Ye shall, indeed, drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with.' That sorrow to the Christian which once proceeded in so large a measure from the world's hatred has very nearly ceased. Individuals in private life are still called upon to suffer reproaches for the name of Christ, and to make the sacrifice, if not of life and lands, of things more dear to natural affection. In the petty persecutions of domestic strife, many a gentle spirit suffers an obscure martyrdom. But for the Church generally, not only have the rack and the fire disappeared, but the tongue of the scorner has lost its sting. A man of God, whose conduct honours his profession, is held in higher estimation, even by the world; or if one world casts him off, there is another as affluent, as enlightened, and as influential, ready to receive him, and advance his interests. But the words of Christ remain. And I cannot agree with those that say the cross has ceased to be borne, religion has become easy, and the way of life too smooth. The profession of religion has, but not the reality. I cannot help thinking that those who find the way so broad, have mistaken the gate. I doubt if they who find their enemies so few have been upon the field. I am sure the enemies that martyrs and apostles feared, are still in equal force upon the ground. Satan is there, and sin is there, and self is there, in undiminished strength. The waters of affliction that once swelled to

an awful size the lesser streams, have turned their courses to augment the greater. The increase of temptation, the seduction of prosperity, the contact and amalgamation with the world, cause the Christian to have more trouble with himself than ever he had with the contempt and despite of mankind. I doubt if the cross be lightened by the change. It is less apparent, certainly, and men cannot so well discern who carries it. But the Father knows, and it is worthy of remark that the deepest expression of our Saviour's anguish passed between the Father and himself. If we do not know ourselves whether we bear the cross or not, as the talk of some who say there is none might lead us to suppose, I should think that, at the best, we have travelled but a very little way towards our crown. Let us consider of it. No child of God believes his sorrow meritorious; the crown of glory is the purchase solely of the Redeemer's cross, ours is no more than the way that leads to it. But in the endurance of it, so different as we have shown, from all that the natural heart endures, the believer sees, and has a right to see with comfort and rejoicing, a feature of conformity to the likeness of his Lord, which also made St. Paul 'rejoice in tribulation.'

I shall say little of those sorrows which the believer shares with all mankind, and which I cannot speak of as a portion of his cross. They are part of the primeval curse; but grace converts even those into a blessing, instrumental in subduing our corruptions, in weaning us from earth, and bringing us more near to God; making a medicine of nature's gall, as skilful physicians use the poisons of the earth, themselves the produce of the curse, but made its antidote by skilful

application. In the endurance of such sorrows, poverty, sickness, separations, and whatever else, the Christian is distinguished from the world, and likened to his Lord, by the spirit in which he bears them, and the proportion in which he feels them. It is a point in which we greatly need to seek and pray for more conformity. We are deficient, all of us. How much too anxious, how much too full of care, how much too sorrowful about the things that perish! What bitter complaints from us where there were none from him! Jesus was too much filled with greater things to pay regard to these. How is it that we are not? Why are our greater joys and greater sorrows so often overbalanced by the pressure of mere temporal concerns? It was never so with him.

If any inexperienced child of God, reading this description of a Christian's sorrow, feels distressed by the consciousness of having never felt it; if he remembers not to have wept for sin, though he believes he is a sinner, to have felt real unhappiness for his Father's absence, though he is sure he loves him; if such a one be young in Christ, and assured of having rested all his hopes upon him, I should say to him, 'Be not distressed, but wait.' The young recruit is not sent immediately to the battle. God often shows us our Saviour before he shows us ourselves. He gives us time to gather strength in him before he allows our enemies to meet us. Conviction precedes consciousness of sin, and often exists a while without it. Be not discouraged, but labour to know more. Look much at Christ, and you will grow like him by looking.

Meantime I cannot close without a word to those who are not young in Christ, who are not weak, who

are not inexperienced, if we may judge by the length and strength of their profession. I have met with such, who not only profess to know nothing of this conflict, this sorrowing after a godly sort, but who also deny the fitness of it. They will have the Christian course to be one of perpetual ease and quietness; they will not allow that a pardoned sinner should be disquieted by sin, neither that it is possible for God to withdraw his presence from them. I can only say, that such is not the language of the Scriptures. It is not the experience of David, nor the experience of St. Paul; it is not the language of saints and martyrs generally. I think it is not in the promises of God; these speak of safety, security, and confidence, but not of unbroken quietness; they tell of certain victory in the end, and warfare by the way. A race, a storm, a battle, a pilgrimage—these are not images of perpetual joy, but these are scriptural images of a Christian's course. There is a holy confidence in the midst of trouble, an assured triumph in the severest conflict, a beacon in the night of storms and darkness. The child of God should never doubt of safety, whatever enemies be upon his way: he need not, and he does not, if he is in Christ, walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. I mean nothing against that full assurance of faith; the same in darkness as in light, in sorrow as in joy; the same when all sensible comfort is withdrawn, as when the brightness of God's face is full upon the soul; the same in the apostles on the mount, in Jonah in the deep, in Christ in his last agony. I believe it to be the privilege of every regenerate heart to seek and to possess this in perpetuity. If our faith be founded on sensible enjoyments, it must depart with them; if it be

founded on our own righteousness, it must sink under a sense of sin; but if founded upon Christ, it can abide all changes, for he is unchangeable. But of those who have built themselves a tabernacle upon that mount where the first disciples stayed so short a time, I must still inquire by what road they came thither. If it was through a host of vanquished enemies; through the furnace of affliction seven times heated; through the deep humiliation of a broken and a contrite heart; then I have nothing to reply. The conflict may be over, the battle may be won. Satan, and sin, and self, foiled by long resistance, may have blunted their weapons and desisted; and the believer, like a soldier at nightfall, may lie down in his tent in peace, waiting the morning to receive his laurels. Many an aged Christian, many a deeply tried and suffering Christian, has, I doubt not, attained to such repose: a season of holiness, and peace, and joy, more like the bliss of heaven than the pilgrimage of earth. But if any have reached it by another road; if they have suffered no crucifixion, borne no cross, endured no spiritual conflict; and, as I have sometimes heard, do deny the need of any such thing — I confess I understand nothing of their religion, I find nothing of it in the Bible; I think they will do well to prepare for a reverse.

CHAPTER VII.

IN HIS JOYS.

'These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.'—John, xv. 11.

Had 'the Man of sorrows' any joys? The Gospels, the proper memoirs of his life, make no mention of any. His tears are spoken of, but not his smiles. When we consider what he was — holy, pure, divine, eternal; when we consider whence he came — from the bosom of the Father, from a throne in glory; and what he came for — to suffer, the just for the unjust; we might conclude that in this unsatisfying, miserable world, the Son of God could find nothing to enjoy—could have no thought of gladness; and yet I think he had. We must look very closely indeed to find the sources of his joy, for they were few, and hidden. Once, and I think no more, it is said in the Gospels, that Jesus rejoiced in spirit. (Luke, x. 21.) The occasion of his rejoicing is very remarkable:—'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' There could be but one cause for this — Jesus had no pleasure in the blindness of any one — no value for the soul of one above another; but he beheld his

Father's glory in it; he knew that had the wise and prudent of this world been chosen to make known his gospel, men would have given to them the glory—perhaps they would have taken it to themselves. But God had chosen the foolish of this world to confound the wise, and Jesus delighted in the preference, because he saw the greater glory that would result from it to God: proving that salvation is of grace, and not of merit; that divine knowledge is imparted immediately from heaven, and not acquired by human understanding. I cannot help remarking how different a feeling prevails amongst men. There is apt to be great rejoicing in the Church when some great one, some wise one, is converted, as if it were more important that such a one should be saved than one who is poor and unknown. A great deal is said about the influence such a conversion may have on others, the power of such a one for doing good, the conspicuousness of a light so elevated. This may be the result if God so pleases, but it is evident that Jesus made no account of all this: he expressly rejoiced that it was otherwise.

I have said, there is in the Gospels no other mention of the Redeemer's joys. It is only by inference we can trace them. It may be inferred justly, that he himself rejoiced in that which he declared to be a cause of joy in heaven — the bringing of a sinner to repentance. 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied;' entirely, when the purpose of his travail should be accomplished in the salvation of his Church; but prospectively in the depth of his sufferings. As St. Paul also speaks, 'Who, for the joy that was set before him, despised the shame.' As one and another

turned to follow him, we must suppose the compassionate Saviour rejoiced in the fruits of anticipated victory, with a joy proportioned to his love — and that was infinite. When, of the ten who were healed, one only returned to glorify God, some pleasure in that one would mix itself with his sense of the ingratitude of the remainder.

And when, in the house of Lazarus, Jesus expressed so little satisfaction in the hospitable assiduities of Martha, needless to him, and injurious to herself, we cannot suppose otherwise than that he felt pleasure in the company of Mary, as she sat listening at his feet. And did he not take pleasure in the Magdalen's love and the Centurion's faith? When we consider how dear to him were the souls he came from heaven to save, and how dear the glory of the Father which he came to vindicate, it cannot be doubted that Jesus felt a joy exalted as his own nature, whenever a sinner gave tokens of repentance, and God was glorified in his works. And if goodness takes pleasure in the exercise of itself, Jesus must have been pleased whenever he exerted his deity for the relief of human suffering. If we would know more, we must have recourse to the Psalms, those sacred soliloquies of Christ's humanity. I pass over the expressions of triumph in the salvation of his people, so frequent in Isaiah and elsewhere: they seem to be the language of the glorified rather than the suffering Messiah; our inquiry is confined to the period of his humiliation. In referring to the Psalms, I shall cite those only of which the application is unquestionable, because applied to Christ in the New Testament. Let them testify as to the character of the Redeemer's joy. A single quotation will unfold it

all. 'Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God.' 'The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and my cup; thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel; my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.'*

Were we to multiply quotations, as we might, the result would be only this — Jesus mentions, the prophetic Spirit mentions for him, only two sources of delight; God, in his law, his glory, and his presence, and the salvation of mankind. If he had any other pleasures — if the senses and affections of his humanity could delight in what gratifies ours — if he could enjoy those external blessings so abundantly bestowed on us, nothing is said of it — he does not tell us so. We know by experience, under the pressure of some great and abiding sorrow, how insensible we become to all that would otherwise delight us: how the beauties of nature, the gifts of Providence, the charms of social intercourse, cease to have any sensible existence in a season of deep calamity. Jesus came on earth in search of pain and sorrow: probably he found no joys but

* Psalm xvi.

those he brought with him from heaven; certain it is, he does not speak of any other.

If this was so, we cannot but perceive in how different a position the servant stands with respect to the enjoyments of this life, to that in which his Lord was placed. 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' The meanest of God's people, the most ungrateful of his enemies, have more sources of temporal enjoyment than were granted to the humanity of his only-begotten Son. The common gifts of Providence, those rains that descend alike on the just and the unjust, how abundant they are; how meet to gratify our senses and feelings, while waiting the more sufficient gratification of the immortal spirit! We are not justified in undervaluing them, and we are not forbidden by our Saviour's example to enjoy them. If he did not, it was because he had a baptism to be baptized with, that admitted of no interval of ease: he had a debt of suffering to pay, which admitted of no temporal joy, and an aim too high, too holy, too much engrossed with the 'joy that was set before him,' to leave him any taste for worldly pleasure. Our case is very different: not only has our debt of misery been paid, but a large purchase of happiness has been made for us; comprising all good things by the way, as well as eternal felicity in the end. Every temporal good is the purchase, or rather the re-purchase, from the forfeiture of the fall, of the Redeemer's blood, given to us richly to enjoy: by him who refused them for himself.

No enjoyment therefore, if lawfully attained and sinlessly pursued, is forbidden to the followers of Christ; and I cannot think that those who are in possession of

much of this world's good, provided it has come to them in the order of Providence, without too much seeking of their own, and who are devoted to his service, have any reason to be uneasy because of this want of conformity to their Lord; neither to reproach themselves that they cull so many flowers where he gathered only thorns. He made himself poor in joy, parting from that eternal weight of it he had with the Father before the worlds began, that we might be made rich in it: what wonder if he gives us more on earth than he enjoyed himself? Let us understand whence we derive it, and take it, and be grateful.

Admitting, in this one respect, a merciful unlikeness, there is not the less a required conformity between the enjoyments of Christ and the enjoyments of his people. We must not forget there is a joy spoken of in scripture that is none of his giving, and none of his sanctioning; it is cursed with a curse, a hundred times repeated. Let the eager contenders after this world's delights stay their hand a moment, and listen to what is said of it; 'Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep.' 'The ease of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools destroy them.' 'And the harp and the viol, the tabret and the pipe, and wine, are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.' 'Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure; and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.' 'Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.' 'The world shall rejoice,

but their joy shall be turned into mourning.' 'Now ye rejoice in your boasting, but all such rejoicing is evil.' 'Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have at my hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.'

These are earthly pleasures, then, and earthly joys, in which there is not only no conformity to the Divine will and character, but of which the enjoyment is sin, and the end is death. There is the joy of Haman, when he 'went forth that day, joyful and with a glad heart.'* There is the joy of the Philistines, when they gathered themselves together to rejoice.† There is the joy of them that are 'lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God,' of them that are 'choked with the pleasures of this life,' of them that 'believed not, but had pleasure in unrighteousness;' of them that not only do such things as are contrary to the judgment of God, but 'have pleasure in them that do them.' It would be vain to seek among these for the renewed image of our Lord. There was in him not only no experience, but no capability of such enjoyment. The pleasures of sin, or lawful pleasures sinfully pursued, were equally impossible to him; and we cannot hesitate to class with these all pleasures that are enjoyed in unthankfulness or forgetfulness of God. And if Jesus had, as we have shown, no pleasure but in his Father's glory, love, and presence, and the salvation of his people, it is unnecessary to show how little likeness to him there is in those, whose enjoyments are chilled and interrupted whenever such themes are forced upon them.

* Esther, v. 8. † Judges, xvi. 23.

The pleasures that remain when the above are excluded—objects of sinless desire to the believer, which he may seek with moderation, ask with submission, and receive with gratitude, great and many as they are, are little in comparison with those which he shares with Christ, and derives entirely from some degree of conformity to the mind that was in him. If we found it difficult to set forth the secret sorrows of the believer, how much more so to give the measure of his joys! Had we the language of heaven to express them in, we should fail to convey a just impression to the mind of the ungodly. We find ourselves in a maze when we would set about it, and know not where to begin, and are ready to give up the attempt. I must recall the Saviour's words, for I perceive that joy is joy, only in proportion as it resembles his.

'How I delight to do thy will!' or as David, 'Lord, how I love thy law!' and St. Paul, 'For I delight in the law of God after the inner man.' This the natural heart does not and cannot. The unconverted man may sometimes do the will of God: he may wish, with a view to the eternal consequences, that he could do it more; he may by his natural judgment perceive that God's laws are good, and, without entering into the spiritual meaning, make an attempt to observe them in the letter. Those who do not so themselves, often bear testimony to their excellence, by admiring those that do. But to love them, to delight in them—this no man ever did, but he who has learned it of his Saviour. Consider what this delight implies. It is in *all* his will—in *all* his laws; this law, this will, may require of us the sacrifice of everything—the sacrifice of ourselves, and our sins, it must require. It can never

require of us what it required of our Lord when he delighted in it; but it might comprise much that is painful to our human nature to suffer, and to do—as the law of God requires the correction of every sinful habit, the renunciation of every proud desire, the subjection of every ungodly passion, and abstinence from many things very inviting to us in the world. The will of God often imposes severe and bitter trial, much passive endurance, as well as active self-sacrifice: a pharisaic effort to do the one, and a calm submission to endure the other, have often been manifested by the children of this world. It is reserved to the children of God to find joy in them. St. Paul rejoiced in his infirmities when it was the will of God they should not be removed; he speaks of them that glory in tribulation St. James bids the rich rejoice when they are made low. Our Saviour bids us rejoice, and be exceeding glad, under falsehood, insult, and oppression. These are not nature's joys; no natural man can say he ever felt them —the believer can. He may feel glad, not only in spite of these things, but because of them; and this he does for the same reason that Jesus did; not because they are less trying to him than to others, but because he so delights in the will of God that it is good to him in any way; and because he so delights in the law of God, that he is glad of anything that may subdue his sins, and bring him into more full subjection to it. There is another sense in which a Christian rejoices in the law of God, as the world cannot. One who thinks to be saved by his own righteousness, or does not wish to part from his sins, is not glad that the law of God is what it is; he would rather its requirements were less, and is always trying to reduce the standard, and to excuse his

deviations. Not so the believer. Being freed by grace from the terrors of the law, the price of his salvation paid, it is gladness to him that God requires holiness—that he is determined to root out every sin, however hard and painful the excision. It would be small joy to know that he is justified, if he were not sure he should be also sanctified ; conformity, exact conformity, is what he longs for; not for worlds would he be excused, and suffered to continue in his sins. On this point, I believe, those that know not Christ will be obliged to convict themselves, and acknowledge that, apart from the consequences, they have more pleasure in sin than in holiness; if God would dispense with obedience, they could enjoy themselves better than they do. Should there be any, as I fear there may be, who profess to be followers of Christ and love his gospel, but who do not love his law—who enjoy very much the doctrines of free salvation, and justification by faith, but disrelish those of sanctification by the Holy Spirit, the growth of grace, and the renewal of the divine image in the soul,—to such I must remark, that this was not the mind of Christ ; he delighted in the law of God, as much as ever he delighted in his mercy or his grace. The unregenerate cannot, because the law is against them ; but if we, as Christians, do not, there is something very defective, to say the least, in our religion.

The believer further manifests his delight in the law of God, by the joy he feels in seeing others do it. As he can never behold sin without feeling pain, so does he never see holiness without delighting in it. What exquisite joy, in the darkness of this evil world, to look upon the lights that grace has lighted—to hear of, to see the works of them that walk according to his law: to

find, it may be in some public walk, it may be in some abode of poverty, one who seems living only to fulfil his will: this is a pleasure worthy of Christ to have enjoyed — and doubtless he did enjoy it, when he beheld Mary at his feet, forgetting everything in her desire to learn of him.

If I speak less of joy in doing the will of God, than in having it done in us, and seeing it done by others, it is not because I do not know it to be greatest. But we so seldom attain to it — it is so seldom we are satisfied with anything we do — we perceive so much more of defect than of conformity in our best performances, that though I know it may be felt, and be more grateful to us than any other joy, and though I know we may so desire it as to say, with our Lord, 'My meat and drink is to do the will of God,' yet the sense of having done it satisfactorily is so rare, I can say little about it; it may at least be judged of by the pain of having failed in it.

'The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and my cup.' 'The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.' This is the gladness of him, who, having found a treasure hidden in a field, for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Perhaps it would be too much to say the believer is the only contented one on earth. I have seen the children of this world so well pleased with its perishable possessions, as long as they can keep them, that I must suppose they too believe they have a goodly heritage, as he did who said to his soul, 'Soul, take thine ease,' &c. But when these words applied to Christ, he had no such possessions — He had not where to lay his head; He had stripped himself of infinite

wealth, and retained no portion to rejoice in but his God. I shall not err, then, if I say that they who resemble Christ are the only people that rejoice in their portion, and think their heritage good, be their earthly condition what it may. The enjoyment of God, as a present portion, is very difficult to describe, but every experienced Christian knows what it is; it is something quite distinct from the expectation of future blessedness; it is what St. Paul calls 'being filled with the fulness of God;' of which David says, 'Happy are the people that have the Lord for their God.' And again, 'Thy lovingkindness is better than life.' And in Rev. ii., 'I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty: but thou art rich towards God.' This is spoken of present good. It is difficult sometimes to separate present enjoyment from eternal hope; but the believer knows that he has both. He as much seeks happiness in God now as he expects to seek it in heaven, and finds it in him when he has none elsewhere. The moments of greatest delight in God are usually those of greatest destitution: when we look for some to take pity, but there is none; and for comforters, but there is no man. Ask the tried saint which have been the happiest moments of his life, and he will tell you of those in which every earthly good had departed from him—in some deep affliction, some extreme suffering, some pressing danger, when man either could not or would not give him any help. These have been his happiest hours; for then, emptied of everything else, he was fullest of God; and had such sensible enjoyment of him as earthly language is not suited to express, nor earth-devoted spirits able to understand. It is then that, having nothing, we are possessed of all things.

I proceed with the Redeemer's words. 'I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth.' The Lord is to his people an abiding portion. He does not, like some friend of earth, come in at distant periods, give us a fond embrace, and go away. He makes his abode with us. He sits down, as it were, at our right hand, to be ready for our need of him. The seasons of peculiar joy we have just spoken of, more akin to heaven than earth, are but for an occasion, and generally pass with it: leaving behind them a more distinct notion of what our future blessedness will be, a firmer evidence of what God will do, by what he has done in our time of need. Were this elevation to continue always, we should not only have no cross to bear, but should be unfit to do our work on earth. The disciples, together with their Master, descended from the mount of transfiguration, to try in very different scenes the love and faithfulness of God. So must our seasons of spiritual enjoyment pass: leaving their remembrance like a beacon light to cheer the believer through his hours of darkness. But it is not in times of exaltation only that the child of God is conscious of his Father's presence. Joyful above measure as these moments are, they are not those visits that he values most. It is the abiding—the sitting down—the perpetual consciousness of God's presence, he values above these evanescent joys. 'He is about my bed, and about my path.' 'He knoweth my down-sitting and mine uprising.' 'When thou goest through the waters I will be with thee.' 'I laid me down and slept, and rose up again, for the Lord sustained me.'

To an ungodly man the sense of God's presence is

no joy. Some restraint it may be upon his actions; and those in whose happier hours the thought of God's presence does not occur, and would not be welcome if it did, will often, in a time of trial, or under a sense of injury, appeal to the omniscience of the Deity for justice and protection: not being themselves the aggressors, they are glad that God is present to behold what is done amiss, and to defend their cause, as they believe he will; though, as soon as the necessity is passed, they can well dispense with his observance, and find it convenient to forget it. This is natural. Nothing can be less agreeable than to live in the presence of one of whom we are not certain whether he be for us or against us; who is taking account of every word and action to reproduce it at some future time. To make the consciousness of God's presence, in the sense in which he is present to all men, a source of confidence and joy, we must be certain that God loves us; that he sees no iniquity in us, otherwise than as a father sees the faults of a cherished child: which, having corrected in love, he will no more remember. To acquire this certainty, we must be assured of our reconciliation with God by the blood of Christ in the renewing of the Holy Spirit: whence it is demonstrable that none but a real Christian can have delight in knowing that God is ever present with him. But the Christian does more than know it; in its common sense he perceives it, he feels it: perhaps he has more sensible enjoyment of it than ever they had, who, in the person of the Son, sate with him, and walked with him in the streets of Jerusalem. How familiar is the import of our Saviour's words, 'We will come in to him, and sup with him!' And how well do they depict the believer's joy! He may eat the bread of affliction,

and have tears for his drink; but the consciousness that God is with him sweetens everything. 'Because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved.' By reason of some indulged sin, or some infirmity obscuring the spiritual sense, the consciousness of this especial presence may be lost to us for a season, as it was to the Son of God in the hour of his humiliation; which will plunge us, as it did him, in deeper sorrow than any earthly loss can bring us to. Then, and then only, is the Christian quite destitute of enjoyment. When affliction sits alone with her cares, when penitence has no company but her sins: it is, as if one sate beside her to whom she may tell them all, certain of sympathy —certain of relief. The world conceives nothing of all this; it is that manifestation of himself which God promised not to the world, but to them whom he had chosen out of the world. Men might understand something of it by what they know of the sweetness of human sympathy. We know what it is, when the heart is bursting with imprisoned feeling, to find some one to whom we can outpour it all; who can understand our emotions, and take interest in our disclosures. I suppose there is no earthly solace like to this. Cannot those who have experienced it, and still oftener felt the want of it, believe what it must be to have such a friend at all times near, at all times ready: from whom we have no apprehensions, no reserves; willing to listen, and certain to reply, by the responses of his Holy Spirit, speaking courage and comfort to the soul? Yes, they might understand—their very want of it would teach them—but they will not believe. They see the servant, as others saw the Master, with nothing in him that they should desire. While he goes in and out

amongst them — the one poor, perhaps, among many rich — the one unfortunate among many prosperous — the one sick among many well — they do not perceive that he carries in his bosom a spring of joy, ebbing and flowing indeed, but never dry; more pleasant at its lowest than all their pleasant things: they do not know he is the happy — the essentially happy one amongst them: satisfied with his heritage, and exulting in his portion, even in the Lord his God: that only portion, beside his sorrows, that Jesus had on earth.

'Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.' Jesus, from the depth of suffering, looked forward to joy. About to lay down his life, as he had already laid aside his glory, he knew that his sinless body could not see corruption; hell and the grave could not retain the Lord of life and glory. In his lowest humiliation he was able to rejoice that the power of Satan would be short, and that his enemies should not ultimately triumph over him. How much does the situation of the believer resemble, in this respect, the situation of his Lord, and his rejoicing agree with his! Whatever the present burthen of his sins, the temptations of Satan, and the trials and seductions of the world, he knows he shall not perish in them. He may suffer, he may sin, he must die—his body must pass through corruption; but he knows it will not remain for ever in the grave, neither his soul in hell. 'For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.'* What joy—what gladness in this assur-

* Rom. vi. 5.

ance, in the certainty of resurrection to eternal life! Let us consider of what this joy is compounded, and who enjoys it: for I believe it is not so universal as we might suppose it would be, where the doctrine of a resurrection is believed.

It is said that all beings are averse to the thought of annihilation: all that has life desires to continue it. This may be so naturally. But fallen man is so peculiarly placed, that if he be not pardoned, and the curse upon him removed, it would be better for him had he never been born, or that he could cease to be. If he does not think so it is because he does not believe his own condition, and the condemnation that awaits him. To an unrepenting sinner, knowing himself to be such, the thought of resurrection would be one of unmixed dread: to be even at peace, he must disbelieve the fall, or disbelieve the consequences, as revealed in scripture. Of course he can be no partaker in this joy. But with the mass of those who think that they believe in the resurrection, how is it? Thoughtlessness, forgetfulness, and indifference, are not joy. To rejoice and be glad that our soul will not be left in hell, we must know that it has been in danger of being so, and deserves to be so. A man does not rejoice in escape from shipwreck who has never been upon the waters, or seen a storm; and were he even there asleep in his hammock, dreaming of summer seas and peaceful havens, though insensible to danger, it could not well be said that he rejoiced in the hope of safety. It is further necessary we should be assured of that which is the subject of rejoicing. Apart from those who do not care, there are a great many people who do not know whether their souls will be left in eternal misery or not. From those

whose vague and empty hopes that they may be happy when they die, have no foundation but their own ignorance and disbelief of God's revealed word, to the fearful and timid saint, who, from obscure views or physical infirmity, cannot perceive his own security when really fixed upon the Rock of Ages, there are many degrees and distinctions of uncertainty, that can by no means be classed together: some being as little entitled to their hopes, as others to their fears. I think the former are not likely to feel joy in the thought of eternity, though they be unwarrantably free from fear. The latter may have a hope strong enough, and a faith firm enough at times, to rejoice in the promises of God, and the expectation of pardon, founded upon them. I have seen people more happy than I should have expected, while professing to feel no certainty of resurrection to life, because not assured of being the children of God. But I should think, when this hope does really amount to anything of an abiding joy, they must be more certain of the forgiveness of their sins than they like to say they are; and have more assurance than they know how to define. I shall not discuss the doctrine of assurance: but perhaps those pious persons, who speak with less confidence than they feel, or ought to feel, of their eternal state, do not sufficiently consider the encouragement they give to the doubtful on the other hand, who take occasion, from the uncertainty thus thrown about the path of life, to believe the path of destruction equally uncertain. Doubt, uncertainty, desire, are not ingredients of joy. A man cannot rejoice in that which he does not know. As the scripture admits degrees of faith, we may equally admit degrees of pleasure proportioned to it, short of the enjoyment of actual know-

ledge. But if the believer would rejoiee after the manner of his Lord, he must know that his soul will not be left in hell, nor his body in the grave. In the midst of sin, and under the deepest sense of guilt, he must know that he is pardoned—in the midst of danger he must be assured of safety—in the hottest of the battle he must be secure of victory. And wherefore not? There is a great deal more doubt on all sides than the scripture warrants. Men are living without God in the world, walking after the course of this world, in the vanity of their minds; and they persist in doubting, and others with mistaken charity doubt for them, whether they are going in the way of destruction; in the very front of God's revealed word—of his attested oath—that they who do so shall perish: in defiance of such examples of his faithfulness in threatening as might well extinguish every doubt. 'For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell,' 'and spared not the old world,' 'bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly,' 'and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly,' what pretence can there be for doubting if they who so live shall perish? Yet not one seems sure of this. On the other hand, God has declared that there is 'no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' He has described, in every manner human language will admit of, what is the meaning of being in Christ, and what it is to walk after the Spirit; and, without a condition more, has said, 'Verily, verily, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.'

Yet how few are sure of this! The two characters

— the regenerate and the unregenerate — the man of the world and the man of God—the dead in Adam and the living in Christ Jesus—are placed in juxtaposition throughout the Bible. They are described, contrasted, measured one against the other, with most minute exactness; they are exhibited in opposition under every imaginable circumstance. And men say they are indistinguishable—so indistinguishable, we cannot know to which party we belong. This would be very strange, if it were true. But it is not true! If it be too much to say that all might know whether they are Christ's or not, which I do not think it is, I can certainly say that thousands might know who do not. Some are endeavouring to deserve eternal life, and doubt if they shall succeed. These might easily be made sure: for by the deeds of the law shall no man living be justified. Others, in accepting through Christ the remission of sins, think there is yet some measure of service to be filled up to entitle them to a participation in the benefits of his death, and they doubt if their imperfect services will reach the required amount. They need not; for certain it is, that when they have done all, they will be found unprofitable servants. Of those who have received the gospel, and know the way of salvation by Christ alone, some are agitated by fears lest they should lose this pearl of price, and depart from the path of life on which they believe that they have entered. This is indeed an agitating doubt, and can only be relieved by scriptures such as these:—'My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.' 'Having loved his own which are in the world, he loved them to the end.' 'Being confident of this very thing, that he which

hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the end.' 'Who shall also confirm you to the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.' For such, by the light of scripture, I see nothing but certainty. If we stand by any strength, by any perseverance of our own, we shall fall certainly; if by the unchangeableness of God's love and purpose, we as certainly shall stand fast. There are others, and too many, who are not certain of their safety, because they are not certain of their choice; they know where the treasure is hidden, and have agreed for the purchase of the field, but when they should be taking possession, they are haggling for the price. They love Christ with such a divided heart, they are never sure whether they love him sufficiently—whether they do not love something else better. They walk so near to the line of demarcation by which the children of God are separated from the children of this world, that though they mean to keep on the right side, they cannot always discover where they are. Far be it from me to say that they ought to feel secure. But 'how long halt ye between two opinions?' Why not decide? Put away the gods many and the lords many that so divide your heart; walk farther from the line of separation you see so indistinctly; make your calling and election sure; choose you this day whom you will serve. There is a certainty even in *your* condition; for as certainly as the word of God is true, you cannot do both; you cannot serve God and mammon. 'If any man love the world, the love of God is not in him.' 'The friendship of the world is enmity against God.'

Thus much is plain. Whatever be the causes of uncertainty respecting the state of our souls, and what-

ever the means by which assurance is to be obtained, it is evident from scripture that such an assurance is to be enjoyed. As St. John speaks: 'Hereby we *know* that he abideth in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.' Again: 'We *know* that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.' 'And we *know* that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.'* And St. Paul: 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.'† And David: 'Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.' Until such an assurance of salvation be obtained, the Christian cannot enter into this portion of the Saviour's joy. It is only when he knows his sins are pardoned, that 'his heart will be glad, and his glory rejoice, and his flesh rest in hope.' As David speaks: 'My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee, and my soul which thou hast redeemed.' And St. Peter: 'Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time, wherein ye greatly rejoice.' And our Lord: 'Rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven.' Indispensable to such joy is a sense of sin and sin's desert, with a knowledge of Christ and of his work; of God's justice to condemn, and his mercy to save. As our sense of these increases, our joy increases. And then what delight it is! At times so overwhelming, the soul seems incapable of more. Have the children of this world ever tasted it? Has the cold moralist tasted it? Let them be honest to themselves—they know they never have.

* 1 John, v. 19, 20. † Rom. viii. 16.

Add to this the future: 'In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.' What will not the ambitious of this world sacrifice for the future—the vague, uncertain, perishable future? With an object of sufficient interest in view, and the prospect of obtaining it, men pass contentedly through days of toil and nights of unrest—no suffering too much, no sacrifice too great: set but a scheme of future bliss before them, the present is absorbed, annihilated. Without it, without a prospect or an object, ease itself becomes insupportable, possession satiates, the soul sickens and loathes its plenitude. There is not on earth a more miserable being than he to whom the world has given all, but has no more to promise. A French writer has said, if she might ask one boon of Heaven for herself, before all things she should choose to be secured for ever from *ennui*, that torment of unoccupied powers and undefined desires. She did not know how only that boon could be bestowed. A future, near, sufficient, certain: in greatness above the sublimest flight of intellect—in bliss beyond imagination's stretch. 'It hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love him.' But it is there; a vision ever bright in the believer's eyes, neither idly to be waited for, nor doubtfully expected. With all the animation of the spirit-stirring race, with all the energising vigour of the battle-field, there is his goal, his crown, his eternal great reward. Children of pleasure, falsely so called, what would you give, in your diseased satiety, for a prospect such as this? To win a name that they may never hear, to earn laurels that will have no living brow to bind, the great ones of this world forego all present in-

dulgence, and no man wonders at their choice. Man knows not why, because he will not inquire of his Maker ; but he does know himself to be so constituted that he cannot do without an object, and cannot be happy without the stimulus of expectation. To regard only the present hour, and take no aim at anything beyond, is considered a mark of an ignoble spirit, of brutish insensibility. To look forward, to reach after, is that which peculiarly distinguishes the intellectual from the animal creation. But how short a way forward—how narrow a reach, compared with the believer's immortality ! Or let it be otherwise—let man have and be satisfied, enjoy and desire no more ; what is his position still ? In spite of himself, he too has a future. He may neither fear it, nor love it, but he is making towards it every moment. He counts his age unwillingly ; he takes it ill that any should remind him of it; every day brings him nearer to the close of his enjoyment, and lessens it in doing so—like the descent of a traveller from a hill, the boundary closing every moment as he advances. But how unlike to the believer's upward progress ! The farther he proceeds, the more the prospect opens ; every day he sees it wider, clearer, and more beautiful. If he counts his years, it is as the minor counts the years of his minority. He may be very rich and very happy now; but the bulk of his inheritance is to come, and it comes nearer every moment ; and when possessed, it will be unbounded, exhaustless, and interminable. Jesus knew what it was, for it had been his from all eternity. His people cannot know, but they do deeply share his glad anticipations.

My subject grows under my hand. Where is the limit of the believer's joys? They increase in the

measuring, and multiply in the telling. Is he not a partaker also in that joy which angels feel on the calling of a sinner to repentance? Jesus doubtless was, and so are we, if we are one with him. It is impossible it should be otherwise. One who knows the value of his own soul cannot remain indifferent to the safety of others' souls; and his heart does surely glow within him, in gladness proportioned to the divine love that animates it, when he hears of the conversion of a sinner, however distant and unknown. He sees in the event another triumph of redeeming love, another creature rescued from destruction: to himself it is the gaining of another brother, another friend and companion for eternity, though he may be a stranger here. The world mistakes this rejoicing for a sort of party-spirit exulting in the accession of strength by the bringing over of another to our side; a bold judgment, nevertheless, when the word of God declares that the triumph extends to heaven. But there are cases of still deeper and nearer interest. The believer may be himself the instrument of salvation to the lost. Saved by grace, without any merit of his own, he may be so blessed, so honoured, as to be the means of saving others in conveying to them the words of life and truth. It is difficult to think so; we feel so unworthy, we scarcely can believe it possible. We feel as Moses did, 'What am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?' 'I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken to thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.' But God answers us as he answered him: 'Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the

seeing, or the blind? have not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.' He chooses to impose this high employment upon us, unworthy and unfit; the most honourable that can occupy a created being, because the likest to the work of Christ on earth. Angels have not been honoured with it. And wonderful as it seems, to none more wonderful than to himself, the believer performs his errand. He finds a fellow-creature in darkness, and he gives him light; in misery, and he gives him bliss; in bondage, and he sets him free. Like the surprise of the apostles when they found the spirits were subject to them, is our wonder at our own success; and while we give all the glory to him in whose hands we are but instruments, it is difficult to conceive a sweeter or a holier joy, than that which animates a believer's bosom when he perceives he has been to any one a messenger of peace. To any one!—but he may be more, far more than this. It may be to our dearest, to our best beloved. It may be to the child over whom we have yearned in patient sorrow through years of godlessness and folly. It may be to the parent, the wife, the husband, the more than self, whose steps we have watched and counted one by one, with throes of intensest anguish, as each step brought them nearer to the precipice they could not see, and we had no power to stop them. If it be one of these we are employed to save! Children of this world, you cannot taste this joy, but you have the means of conceiving what it may be. You have pitied, you have loved, you have tasted the pleasure of rescuing some fellow-creature from temporal ruin, restoring some distressed one to temporal prosperity. You do

know the pleasure of doing good. And you know what it is to watch expiring life in your own best-beloved; to dread a separation for what you call for ever, and by a blessing on your cares to receive the dying back again. You remember that sentence—'Out of danger.' Stretch the idea from the finite to the infinite: think of the danger as everlasting, of the ruin as endless, the separation as eternal. You may then compass something of an idea of the believer's joy in the spiritual regeneration of those he loves; they are 'out of danger.' If there is a joy worthy to have filled and satisfied the Redeemer's bosom in the days of his humanity, it surely might be this.

There is still much more. I do not know if Jesus ever tasted the delights of human sympathy. In most things he could not, for he could not be understood. There are those among men whom deeper-toned feeling or intenser intellect condemns to walk alone; for ever spending what no one pays them back: capable of administering to others' wants, but obliged to go to heaven with their own: like a stream of water from which all may drink, while but one can supply the current when it fails. Their joys and sorrows, and thoughts and feelings, if they attempt to express them, are not understood; and like the planetary spheres, they seem so bright to others, no one conceives the cold opaqueness of their isolated spirits. Christ, above all others, was so circumstanced. From the time he quitted the bosom of the Father, he had no equal, no companion; his disciples, they who loved him best, wondered at him and knew not what he meant. In a time of extreme necessity, angels were sent to minister

to him because mortals could not, and they perhaps were insufficient. I do not know if ever Jesus sat down with those he loved, to talk together of their eternal hopes, and hold communion of the things unseen, for mutual consolation; it is likely not. There is, nevertheless, a passage in a psalm applied to Christ, that might imply it; where, speaking of him who betrayed him, he says, 'We took sweet counsel together,' &c. But whether Jesus tasted it or not, he has left the communion of the saints to be a blessing and a solace to his church. Dissensions and divisions among ourselves have so made void this blessing, it scarcely can be said to exist any longer among the Church at large. But between individuals whom circumstances bring together, and the bonds of Christ unite, there is a sympathy of most exquisite enjoyment, quite separate from the intercourse of earthly friendship; although the strongest cement to it, and its best ingredients when they are found together. And because a believer's hopes, and joys, and expectations, and desires are common to all believers, and their object of deepest interest is the same, the language of his heart will be understood, and his feelings find sympathy, where by nature there would have been no bond of union. From our great imperfection, this enjoyment is not what it might be; perhaps never so little what it might be as at this time. But there are those still, who fear the Lord and speak often one to another; and there is a sweetness in such intercourse, a holy joy in such communion, to which Christ is a party, and God himself a listener,* which cannot be equalled by anything in the ordinary

* Mal. iii. 16.

intercourse of life. It makes, indeed, as every experienced Christian knows, the intercourse of common society seem very palling and insipid. Accustomed among themselves to communications of such deep and heart-touching interest, the children of God are very sensitive to the littleness of all common talk; and in contact with the world are thence exposed to be sometimes thought offended when they are really only uninterested.

'If any man be in Christ Jesus, old things are passed away, all things are become new.' From this renovating process flows a perpetual current of increasing joy into the bosom of God's people. Their possessions are all new possessions. Their house, their lands, their friends, their children, the common air they breathe, the bread they put into their mouths: oh, it is all new, when sanctified by the blessing of the Lord, when divine love has taken possession of the heart. It is like that enchanter's touch which turned everything to gold. We all know the magic influence of some newly acquired bliss to embellish everything around us. How it changes the scene, and changes the actors, and changes the most common incidents and occupations, by the *couleur de rose* it spreads over them. This is but a faint resemblance of the sober, calm, abiding tinge of heavenly blessedness, that shines on everything in the Christian's way. Would we could say effectually to the hearts of all men, 'Taste and see!'

CHAPTER VIII.

IN HIS DEATH.

'If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.'—Rom. vi. 8.

It is commonly said, that man is born to die; yet this was never true but once. The children of Adam are born indeed, since their first father's fall, in a condition in which they must die, or perhaps we should say better, are to die; for of the necessity we know nothing; the translation of Enoch and Elijah are unexplained, as also that future transmutation of which St. Paul speaks—'We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.' The sons of Adam, then, are to die, but this was no purpose of their first creation. Life, not death, was the gift that God bestowed upon his creatures, when he placed them in what we now so justly call a passing, perishing world. 'Death,' natural and spiritual death, 'has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;' but unless we are to say that man was designed for sin, we cannot say that he was designed for death. It tends to no conclusion, that science finds in every new-born child the symptoms of fore-doomed decay; that the anatomist perceives the nice machinery of the human frame is not calculated to work on unimpaired for ever. The same sentence that

called thorns and thistles from the soil accursed, called disease and decay into the dust-consigned body; — the same concussion that altered the whole arrangements of the natural world, smote the machinery of the human frame. And who can say how it altered it? how instantly it became unfit for its original purpose, incapable of its first destination, and unmeet to serve the spirit that animated it, as that spirit itself became to serve its Maker. Whether the likeness of God, in which he created man, was a corporeal as well as a moral similitude, revelation does not intimate. By analogy we might be led to suppose it; and the rather that the term man, 'Let us make man in our own likeness,' designates the compound being, spirit, soul and body, and neither distinctively. On the other hand, form is adverse to our ideas of Deity, and when the moral image begins to be retraced upon the soul, no change takes place in the body; that impartation of the Spirit which renews the mind, makes no impression on the corporeal frame; while of the renewal of the body at the resurrection, no more is predicted, than that it shall be like his glorious body who is man as well as God.

It does not signify—in Adam all die: the soul at once, by the loss of God's vivifying Spirit—the body by slow, but not postponed disease; for I believe it is philosophically said, that man begins to die at the moment of his entrance into life, being never purely healthful. So also in Christ all must be made alive; the soul in gradual sanctification by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, perfected at the moment of departure hence — the body at once, when the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised. The dissolution of

the union between them, which makes of the one an unclothed spirit, of the other a sodden clay, we distinctively call death; but that is not in scripture the primitive or the principal meaning of the term, nor its most frequent application. We talk very loosely of such things, and if it were only talk it would not signify. But I think our ideas also may be too vague, too unexamined, and too little weighed. We call the soul immortal, the body mortal — terms sufficiently accurate for common parlance, wherein they mean no more than that at our dissolution the spirit retains its conscious being in happiness or woe, while the body for a time becomes insensible of existence. We have received this impression from scripture — perhaps from nature — certainly from tradition throughout every age and country in the world. I have not the smallest doubt of its correctness. But, excepting in this restricted sense, the terms are not correct, as applied to soul or body preferentially. One is no more mortal, no more immortal, than the other: nothing is immortal in itself but God. The spirit exists no longer than he holds it in existence. He says it shall exist for ever; and on his word we justly say it is immortal. But perhaps we neglect to consider what makes it so; as if immortality were inherent in its nature, which cannot, I conceive, be true of any created essence. And the body—has not God said it shall be immortal too?—raised up with the soul to everlasting life. We see the vivifying spirit leave it—we see the particles of matter that composed it, separate and disperse; we say that it is dead, and we speak correctly, for God has so applied the term. But not one particle of that body ceases to exist: we have no reason to think, but every

reason to think otherwise, that one atom of the material universe has ever been annihilated, or that the Creator does not intend to maintain it in some form of existence for ever.

With respect to the human body, he has told us what he intends: 'The Lord shall raise it up again at the last day.' Life is suspended, not terminated; and it is consciousness, not existence, that is suspended, for every portion of the body is still in being, and the same body shall arise to immortality. We pretend not to discern in what the identity will consist; but it is the resurrection of the dead—the buried dead, which is the body, not the soul, for that was never committed to the dust. Therefore there must be corporeal identity, however great the change. 'It is sown in corruption—it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour—it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness—it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body—it is raised a spiritual body.' Such is the manner of its change—the manner of its unity is a secret of Omnipotence.

Soul and body are equal participants of the fall, and man's subsequent corruption. Some people speak of their bodies as if they were the only culprits, holding the pure spirit in unwilling bondage, and fancy that as soon as the body is put off the soul will, without any process of sanctification, be found immaculate. Men talk—sinners dead in trespasses and sins talk of their angelic spirits prisoned in unmeet habitations here, hereafter to soar in spotless purity to their native heaven; as if, unearthly in themselves, our souls were but inearthed in corruption for a time, and that against their will. This is poetic language, but it is not the

language of scripture or of truth. These high-born spirits have inearthed themselves, and do but too well become their sordid habitation, and too well like it; and when the base habiliments fall off, they will be found naked indeed, but not clothed in angelic purity; they will be freed indeed, but only from the restraints that fear and conscience, and forbearing mercy, now impose upon them. To all whom the hour of dissolution overtakes in an unregenerate state, in the likeness of the first Adam, the only effect of the soul's separation from the body, is to leave the one as meet for hell as the other for the dust: for in Adam both have died—one spiritually, one temporally; and unless made alive in Christ, both are dead eternally. For though the departed spirit still exists, and the buried corpse is to be recalled to judgment, this miserable perpetuity of being is never called *life* in scripture—it is emphatically called *death*—death everlasting. Upon which I again observe, the word properly designates, in divine language, a state of existence, not an extinction of it. When applied by the unbelieving Jews to those who had departed in faith, Christ denies the application:—'God is not the God of the dead.' He would not have done so had they spoken of Ahab or Jeroboam, though all were committed to the same dust.

Unmindful of the real nature of the fall, inconsiderate Christians sometimes make a fictitious distinction between the soul and the body when they speak of sin; as if since its renewal by divine grace, the soul had become the excused and irresponsible victim of the body's frailty and corruption. 'The flesh warreth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.'

This is scripture language, but it cannot be so applied. The term flesh, here and elsewhere in Holy Writ, designates the whole of the natural man, both soul and body, as opposed to the spiritual man renewed by divine grace. The words make no distinction between what men thoughtlessly call their vile bodies and their immortal souls. The body was not vile till sin made it so ; the soul is vile—most vile of all things, till it is washed in the blood of Jesus. Eve's spirit sinned by a culpable desire to know, before her hand was put forth to take the fruit. It was the corroding envy of a sin-conceived soul that armed the first murderer's hand ; and it is still out of the heart that proceed all sinful desires and ungodly purposes, and 'every evil thought.' And when by conversion of the heart the spirit becomes an altar of the living God, the body becomes his temple, sanctified unto good works. 'Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?' Christ has not redeemed the one, and left the other to destruction. The Holy Spirit has not perfected the soul, and left it to endure innocently the corruption of the body. How differently speaks the beautiful benediction of our Church, formed on the language of scripture :—'The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your bodies and souls unto everlasting life.' A season of probationary suffering, of infirmity and sin, remains to both. How large a portion of that sin, that infirmity and sorrow, is the spirit's own : how much oftener the body sinks under the soul's anguish, than the soul under the body's weakness, they have had small experience in life who do not know.

The inaccuracy of our ideas as to what death really

is, has in many ways an injurious tendency—it is liable to beget in some minds an indolent acquiescence in sin, as a temporal calamity incident to the Spirit's union with the body; it acts fatally on those who, soul and body, are dead already, and do not know it; and sometimes painfully on those who, alive already in Christ Jesus, shall not see death.

What, then, is the reality of that sentence of death which has passed on all men, for that all have sinned, as it stands unreversed against the still impenitent? It is a fearful thing. We need not separate the soul from the body, the present from the future—it is abhorrent to both, it is awful throughout. It begins in the womb—it is suspended never—it terminates nowhere. And if there is a point in the dark infinitude so much more awful than the rest, that it has come to be called exclusively by the name that properly designates the whole, it is because at that point all hope, all possibility of revocation, terminates. But oh, what deaths men die before they come there—what deaths of mental anguish and corporeal torture—till, reckless of all consequences, they call on this to be their friend, and precipitate themselves into it, as if it were really what it seems to be—an end! 'The life of man is as a flower of the field, which springeth up in the morning, and at night is cut down and withered'—'as a tale that is told'—'as a vision of the night when it is past'—'so soon passeth it away, and we are gone.' These are just but partial figures—beautiful images of life's frailty, brevity, and nothingness. But if the imagination seizes exclusively on these, as it is too apt to do, because they are the least abhorrent features of death's countenance, and takes them for the whole;

with adventitious horror adding to them perhaps the ceremonials of the tomb, the funeral rites, the silent churchyard, and the loathsome worm, an impression is left upon the mind as injurious as it is fictitious; blinding with mere sentiment the eyes of the thoughtless perishing sinner; and veiling from the timid saint the bright prospect of eternal bliss. The fear of death, we are told, is natural. Yes, it is most natural, and most reasonable, for it is of all things the most abhorrent to a rational and spiritual being. Would that men feared it more a thousandfold! But let our fears know their object. It is not the cold clay and loathsome worm; it is not the writhing pang of corporeal agony that separates the body from the soul; it is not even the mental anguish of parting love and disappointed hopes. All these are objects of exaggerated dread, suffered more in anticipation than even in the reality—of which it is justly said in Scripture, 'Men live all their lifetime in bondage through fear of death.' Death is not the thing of a day, an hour, a moment. He is not a predatory conqueror whom a single victory satisfies, and he returns no more. He is a king—the king of terrors; he is said to have reigned from Adam downward. From the first moment of existence the infant becomes his sometimes spared, but always devoted, victim. Moral, physical, eternal death begins. Of the first, man is insensible, but not of the sufferings that proceed from it. He may not care for sin; but he cares for the stings and torments of his perturbed passions, and all the wounds he receives from others' sin—that incalculable fund of misery which human selfishness has amassed for daily distribution among the children of men; the consequence, all of it, of moral

death—the death that the soul has died. And then the physical: what tortures some begin to suffer as soon as they begin to live! what lives of lingering disease they are consigned to in their mother's womb! But this is not all, nor most. The king of terrors reigns not in our bodies only—he reigns in our families, in our homes, in our hearts: he can desolate them all. And what good can the life do us that he spares? What joy is there that he cannot end? What prospect is there that he cannot devastate? What heart is there so fenced, so fortified in bliss, that if heavenly consolations interpose not, he cannot find means to break it? And, finally, there is the death eternal. The much would still be little but for this. If the young beauty were indeed cut off like the fresh grass of the morning — if the busy for this world were crushed like the ant in their no longer required labours, and the bereaved and broken-hearted had only to lie down in the grave, and be at rest, death would be but half a tyrant still — at least there would be a limit to his reign; he could give no wound so deep but his own hand must heal it, nor hold a slave he must not at last set free. But that worm that dieth not—that fire that is not quenched—that lifting up of the eyes in torment—that calling upon the rocks to fall on us, and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb—of him who was once a lamb, gentle, tender, suffering—first crucified, and now neglected—but then to be a judge and an avenger!—should men look on such a death, and fear not? Is this the tremendous reality for which we substitute a sentimental fiction, and shudder at the one while we brave out the other? If this be a real picture of mortality, and it is so to all who are yet dead in Adam,

men talk a foolish language. There is no cowardice in fearing such a death as this, and no courage in going rashly and fearlessly to meet it; there is no philosophy in despising it under any of its characters, and no dignity in resigning ourselves to its bondage. The more elevated the nature is, the more it should shrink from such a destiny; the more refined and purified the feelings, the more abhorrent should be such a fate. Never was it so much so as to Christ himself—to him who alone was really born to die—who purposely, voluntarily, lived on earth that he might suffer death. Those who speak lightly, or even courageously, of this penalty of sin, will find no encouragement in Christ's example. He did not despise it—he did not brave it—he endured it; but not that with stoic insensibility; not that without shrinking. There is not in all his holy bearing upon earth a shade of that heroic bravery which men so much admire, and persist in calling great, though often exhibited by the worst of men, and in the worst of causes; and when exhibited in the best—yes, let us tear away at once the guise with which human admiration has clothed this heroism—whatever the character, whatever the cause, whoever does not shrink from suffering, does not fear death, on any other ground but because in Christ he has eternal life, is not brave, but mad, is not exalted, but stultified, brutalised. Like the wreath-encircled ox prepared for heathen sacrifice, he goes he knows not whither, to endure he knows not what; to meet unhelped the whole weight of that tremendous sentence—'In the day thou eatest thou shalt die;' death temporal, spiritual, eternal; that sentence which when he met who had the strength of Deity to bear it with, he

started back, and could not have proceeded but for the memory of his Father's promise—'Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thy Holy One to see corruption;' but that he knew the enemy was to perish in his grasp, and Death to die in him. No—Christ was not so brave as men are; he feared sin's penalty, and his Father's vengeance; 'he groaned in spirit, and was troubled.' He had need to encourage himself before it, in calling to mind the object of his suffering, and the reward that was set before him. 'Yet for this cause came I into the world.' Eternal death—the sentence passed on us, and, if not reversed, extending from our birthtime on for ever—in him was concentrated into a few brief years, in collected but not diminished agony. We see in a moment how this would be impossible but for his infinity as God. If he were anything less than God, his few years' death and passion might be a pictorial representation—an effigy of our eternal death: but an equivalent, an atonement, it could not be: nothing but infinitude of power to endure could make the concentration possible. To enter into the particulars of Jesus' death, from his assumption of mortality till, having finished his work, and made an end of death for himself and his redeemed, he put it off and returned to the bosom of his Father, would be repeating what I have already said in the chapter on his Afflictions. Be it sufficient to say that death to our Lord was the season of his detention here, not the moment of his departure hence: it was the burthen of imputed sin, with all the sufferings incident upon it, and the wrath of God therein; which ended with the ending of this mortal life.

I do not ask now, as I have asked before, where is

there any likeness to it in the world? In their death there is a likeness, though in the spirit of it none. The same curse that was upon Jesus, is still upon every one from whom he has not removed it—upon every one who is not made alive in him. That death which Jesus feared, is still for them to fear. That suffering which his holy soul abhorred, they are hourly exposed to, perhaps hourly enduring; and a moment is at hand, they know not how near, which is neither the end nor the beginning of their death; but that point in its eternal duration, which is the end of hope, the beginning of despair, wherein the tyrant will clasp his long affianced ones in indissoluble union. But they are unmindful of its approach; pleased with their present, and fearless of their future death.

I know not which is the most melancholy sight to a believing mind. The world's proud hero dying amid the shouts of recent victory, with an appeal to posterity to record his deeds, and to fame to secure him immortality, but unmindful of a record already made in heaven, and an immortality prepared perhaps elsewhere; or the patient sufferer, arrested by sickness in the prime of life, yielding with mournful resignation to a hard necessity, but ignorant of sin, a stranger to Christ, and regardless of that primeval sentence outstanding still against him, never considering that death is more to him than the dissolving of his earthly ties, and cutting asunder of his earthly schemes. 'Triumphant in death;' 'Resigned in death.' Oh, how the believer shudders at those phrases, as they are uttered and repeated through the world with such insensate admiration! Could some one of those celestial beings, who are about our paths, doing the errands of the Almighty, awed as they must

be by what they hear, interpose, in accents audible, a single word between those perverted epithets—the world itself would start aside with horror. 'Triumphant in eternal death;' 'Resigned in eternal death.' How intensely terrific! And yet it is so. If there be truth in anything that God has said, it is so. If that Scripture we profess to believe is not a fiction, it is thus with every one who, having sinned after the similitude of Adam, is not renewed by the Holy Spirit into the likeness of Christ Jesus. There is nothing in such deaths as these that can be likened to the Saviour's death. To all he sank beneath they are indifferent—to all that supported him they die insensible. 'My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?' They have a God in Christ to whom they do not cry—they are forsaken, and they do not know it—they are dying under the burthen of unexpiated sin, and do not feel it, do not fear it.

But Christ is no longer dead: and he can die no more. And they that are in him are dead no longer. 'They are alive from the dead,' 'passed from death to life.' And they can die no more. 'If any man keep my saying he shall not see death.' They are united in eternal vitality with him who has 'abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.' It is here, in the redeemed of the Lord, we must look for the remaining features of the Saviour's death. The world and the Church have for once divided the likeness. The judicial sentence—the penal agony—the divine abandonment—the crush of unforgiven sin—these, the real, the only essential death, are for his enemies—for them who first crucified or now neglect him. 'Crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh.'

Far other is the resemblance his people are called upon and privileged to exhibit. There is a sense in which the disciple of Christ is required to be conformed to the likeness of his death, which having spoken of at length in the chapter on Afflictions, I shall advert to here but briefly. In his body,—ay, and in his soul too, he is susceptible of many a wound, but never a mortal one, from him who is still his enemy — his vanquished, flying enemy — no longer his tyrant or his king. He has limbs that can ache, and loved ones that can be taken, and a heart that can be desolated. The Christian spirit is not a bold and lofty daring, that makes light of the consequences of the primeval curse, whatever portion of them may be still upon him. He is as one just recovering from a mortal pestilence. He is no longer in fear of dying, no longer susceptible of the disease, and can walk securely amid the contagion round him. But he still suffers from the past; he is weak and in pain, and must have recourse to many bitter medicaments for the recovery of his strength: small matters in comparison, occasions of gratitude rather than complaint: but still painful remembrances of dangers past, not joyous but grievous while they stay, which he looks forward in hope to be relieved from. As St. Paul speaks, 'These light afflictions which are but for a moment;' but still they were afflictions, small remnants of the death that nature loathes, symptoms still lingering in the recovered soul. A Christian is not called upon to love them, neither permitted to despise them. 'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord.' He is not heard to talk about these lingering characters of death with a proud and philosophic bravery, nor to give applause to them that do. This is that language of society the believer can-

not learn. Death and eternity are to him but one idea, and that idea is either hell or heaven: he cannot talk lightly and fictitiously of either. Jesus never did. Young Christians who have such a language to unlearn, should do it with watchful care; for although it be our mother tongue, it does not become the adopted family of God. It is not seemly to talk of death as if it were some mysterious change—a mighty casualty leading to unknown results—a magician's wand to touch individual being into a half-mortal, half-immortal thing—a half-condemned and half-acquitted victim: as if it were an isolated moment, dependent on a thousand accidents, which it is reasonable to fear, though it be the gate of everlasting bliss, and noble to brave, though it be the entrance to eternal woe. No conventional usage of society can justify the believer in such language, however unmeaningly used. We know that it is not so. We know the moment of dissolution is only the consummation of the sentence, 'In the day that thou eatest thou shalt die:' or the consummation of the promise, 'He that believeth on me hath everlasting life'—fit object of the intensest horror or divinest joy. We know that it frees the penitent from the presence of that sin from whose dominion he was freed before, and consigns the impenitent to its penalty and its tyranny for ever. We know it is the sickle that cuts down both wheat and tares—one for the garner, the other for the burning—but makes no change in either. We never ought to hear the word without having one or other of these destinies in momentous reality before us. We never ought to use it but in such a manner as becomes the lips of one who believes in the absolute, fixed, immutable certainty, that the severance of soul and body which this

word signifies, is nothing more, and nothing less, than the consummation of happiness or misery, sin or holiness, life or death, which has begun before the stroke is struck. We may not know, we are not in most cases called upon to judge, which of the two realities is designated when we hear of individual deaths. If that on which it depends should be within our cognisance, we do know even this. And what do we but encourage others in unbelief by expressing ourselves doubtfully? But if not, we know still that it is one or the other—an awful alternative, respecting which it ill becomes us to speak in the doubtful and almost heathenish phraseology current among men.

In speaking of dissolution, or thinking of it for ourselves, I wish the language of our lips, and of our hearts, were more constantly what it should be. Where the discrepancy is mere timidity of expression, in which the heart has no concurrence, a very little consideration would surely convince the pious Christian how much encouragement he gives to indifference and incredulity, by alluding to his decease with expression of alarm—to his advancing years in a tone of regret—to the pass of dissolution as a barrier beyond which he cannot see. I have been pained—perhaps we all have—by hearing such expressions from persons for whom I knew, and they knew, there was no shadow of a meaning in them. They did not feel regret, or alarm, or doubt, when the idea of death was seriously present to their minds. These were but careless words. But I have been pained for the unbelieving, the fearful, the insensible, who hearing such language from persons professing to have the secrets of eternal life, might well suppose the Christian's joy and confidence a fiction, and hold themselves ex-

cused for disregarding what those who received it could not depend upon. When Jesus stood at the tribunal of his enemies, the moment when his boast must seem the most absurd, when his pretensions were about to be most obviously disproved, and there was, of all times, the least probability that he should be believed, Jesus, silent upon all besides, refusing to answer accusations or say whence he came, opened his mouth to assert his future glory: 'Hereafter shalt thou see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power.' Christians, in presence of their temporal death, have been often heard to use as confident a language; and may use it, and ought to use it, in the same faith as Jesus did. But why should it be heard only on the death-bed, where he may not have power to utter it; or if he does, may have no careless world to hear it? Standing always in death's presence, always in presence of at least his spiritual enemies, and compassed by a crowd of unbelieving witnesses, why does a false, and I think a pernicious modesty, prevent the assured believer from speaking always with the confidence he feels of his future destination, and the glory that awaits him when he shall seem to die? Men would call it presumption, they would say that he blasphemes. No doubt, and so they have done before. Jesus was mocked, and his pretensions were not believed: and yet it was the only thing he thought it necessary to declare. And I must think that God is dishonoured, and his sure promise put to shame, when those who feel this confidence forbear to express it if occasion serves; or if occasion does not serve to speak of it directly, are heard to drop anything not consistent with it. Jesus did neither. I am aware that there is more in it than this. It is the heart full often

that, when brought to trial by its internal accusers, refuses to reply, and hearing from within the decisive question, 'Art thou, then, the son of God?' has not courage sufficient to assert it. There may be reason for the hesitation, or there may not. In either case, though I think we should still so guard our speech, that our fears may appear what they really are, doubts of our individual interest in Christ, not of the things prepared for them that love him, I do not pretend to say that we should manifest a confidence we do not feel. It is the heart that must first be dealt with. 'Make your calling and election sure.' If this could not be done, you had not been bidden to do it. God's honour is concerned in it, and the welfare of your brethren. And when this is done, when you have no reasonable doubts that you are united in Christ in the resurrection to life, contemplate in him your real station with respect to death, and do not rob yourself of your happiness, nor him of his glory before men.

The death that Jesus feared—speaking of ourselves as believers—it is not for us to fear. The judicial curse —the penal sentence—the divine displeasure originally designated by that awful word, as first pronounced in paradise—if we are born anew in Christ, we have nothing to do with these, and therefore cannot fear them; they have been suffered; they are past; it was a debt to Almighty justice and has been paid. 'Death,' such death, 'is swallowed up in victory.' What, then, remains to us of that transmutation men distinctively call death, which all are to undergo? The same that remained to Christ when all of this was past—'I go to my Father.' It is indeed impossible to say what that may mean: what may be the measure of that eternal

weight of glory, which is prepared for us with him beside the Father's throne: the bliss of those many mansions in the Father's house, prepared for our reception as soon as our sometime enemy shall bring the key. Death! what a misnomer! The believer uses the word because it serves the purpose, but the idea it stands for in the mind has nothing death-like in it; rather say that all is death beside, and that word stands for life. It means what Christ meant when he said, 'It is finished.' There is a resemblance, an identity between him and his people, that in this feature at least cannot be gainsayed. In the weak of his flock it may be faintly sensible, and but obscurely seen; not so much because it is not there, as because it is obscured by some extraneous cause. The weakest believer does look with delight towards eternity in general, however occasional doubts of his own state may interrupt the joyful anticipation; or some physical infirmity, or some superstitious dread of the mere act of dying, may veil the prospect from his eyes, as a mere vapour veils the risen sun. In the strong in faith, the resemblance may be seen entire, 'I go to my Father:' this is the idea of dissolution: and it means to him all that it meant to Christ: the end of every evil—the end of sorrow, pain, privation, and, above all, of sin: the beginning—he does not know of what—but of that which He who alone knew, claimed as the reward of all his travail here, that he might have it to distribute to his redeemed. 'The glory which thou gavest me, I have given to them.' 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.' After long search for the rude, imperfect lineaments of the Saviour's image in

the bosom of humanity, it is beautiful for once to find the copy so near to the original. We—I speak on the supposition that we have in our hearts the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen—we hear continually within us what once was heard from without, 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours.' And we can say what one before has said, 'We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.' 'We desire a better country, that is a heavenly.' 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.' Or those still sweeter words, for they were Jesus' words, and they may be ours in him: 'O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee.' 'And now come I to thee.' 'Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son.' All these things the believer hears in his own bosom, whether men hear them from his lips or not. In calm anticipation they go with him through all the devious paths of life, the solace of his saddest, the exhilaration of his happiest hours. When angels came down to minister to Christ, what think we that they told him of—what could their bright presence bring into his mind, but all the glories of his Father's house? And when the same celestial messengers come to us—when in some dark calamity, or extreme temptation, the Spirit comes himself, what does he present to us? That time when the wicked ceases from troubling, and the weary are at rest—that place where there are pleasures at God's right hand for evermore. And there is no darkness which the brightness of this

vision cannot dissipate—no fiery darts of the wicked one it cannot quench. Death, temporal death, that king of terrors, whose ghastly form the children of this world vainly try to bid away, lest it should spoil their joys, appears before the believer at his bidding, clothed like an angel of light, to gild with hope the hours of his sadness; for death and heaven to him are but one idea.

I suppose no argument is required to prove that there can be no connexion between this joyful anticipation of eternity, founded on a scriptural understanding of its great realities, and a good hope through faith of our adoption in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that sort of sentimental desire to die which is not uncommon to a melancholy temperament under earthly disappointments; sometimes even in satiety of earthly good. I am not sure if that desire, as I have frequently heard it expressed, most frequently by young people, is a real desire, which would not shrink before the demon it invokes. But if it is, we need examine no further than its language, to perceive that the subject of the invocation is no reality. The death they call for is a death that no one ever died, or ever will. There are but two deaths—hell, the death in Adam; heaven, the death in Christ. Their hope, or their talk at least, for perhaps it is little more, is of reposing in the grave—of everlasting rest — shelter from man's injustice—a draught of oblivion to the past; to use the commoner phraseology, 'a release:' and if heaven be at all in the account, it is the heaven of poetry, not of scripture. To these mournful sentimentalists we must say again, There is no such death: be not in so much haste to try the yet unknown: account that the long-suffering

of your Lord is salvation; or may be so, if you make diligent use of the interval he mercifully grants you.

But pious Christians do not always desire death. I do not know that it is required of them to desire it. The Scripture does not say it is; and I perceive that the most godly and holy among men, whom we should think the surest of their future destiny, and the fittest to enter upon it, do very commonly not desire to die, and even manifest some measure of unwillingness. I confess there is an anomaly in this, for which I cannot to its full extent account, without referring it to a divine ordination for some beneficial purpose to the Church. To a certain extent it may be well explained. St. Paul was in a strait betwixt two: not that he was doubtful which was better for himself, but because his presence seemed necessary to his disciples. This is a motive of weight with others, as well as with St. Paul, particularly where the welfare and happiness of our best beloved on earth seem to depend on our continuance with them. Again, a mysterious and undefined dread of the mere act of separation between the soul and body has more effect on some minds than I think is reasonable; creating a fear of the passage into that eternity which is itself an object of desire. More frequently perhaps than either, the reluctance to depart arises from a still lingering attachment to the things of time and sense, not entirely superseded in our divided nature by that love of God which would naturally beget a desire to be with him: for we must ever remember, whether in judging of ourselves or others, how much of earth there is remaining in the most heavenly-minded among men—how much of the old man still struggling with the new. We are disposed, perhaps, generally to

attribute our unwillingness to depart to a doubt of our being ready for the change. If we doubt of our interest in Christ, of our renewal by the Holy Ghost, we do well to desire the day of grace prolonged: I have spoken of this state before. But if we are assured of that, the Spirit witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God ; if we know that we have passed from death to life, being justified by faith in Jesus Christ, I do not think our desires after glory should be checked by any doubts of our sufficient sanctification. It is so certain that God will not draw his ore from the fire till it is sufficiently purified, and so impossible for us to know whether it is so or not, that I think we ought to leave it entirely to his care, making no distinction between the wish to depart, and the wish to be ready to depart, since the one includes the other. No one of God's people will be taken in unfitness. So long as he detains us here, we may understand his purpose, and any impatience to abridge the process would be most unbecoming. But to feel fear or reluctance lest he who has undertaken our salvation should let his work be spoiled by the intervention of a too hasty removal, is to distrust him and not ourselves ; still supposing we know that we are born anew in Christ: for I would not be understood to encourage a presumptuous and a rash desire to try uncertain ground. I confess, however, that when due weight has been given to all these counter influences, there remains something still to be accounted for, which, because I cannot solve it otherwise, I am willing to ascribe to providential appointment. To call it 'a natural love of life' is no solution, because the believer, like his Lord, is dying only while he lives on earth, and is alive for ever when he seems to die ; all

that he has to do with death is here: his essential life is hid with Christ in God. Then it is so natural to desire felicity, to long after what we love, to be willing to leave what is dear for the one thing dearer, I am persuaded neither nature nor reason can decide why they who know heaven to be a happier state than earth, who have no doubts of their translation thither, and do really love their Saviour and their God more than the most beloved of earthly things, do not invariably and at all times feel that they should like to die. But I perceive they do not. I cannot say what is the judgment of God respecting this unwillingness: but lest the world should infer from it that the expectations of the godly are a fiction, to which they cannot fully trust themselves, this I must subjoin, that I never saw this reluctance outstand the actual approach of death; and I do suppose that no child of God has ever died unwillingly. In many cases, when death has only appeared to be at hand, I have seen the most earnest desire to depart and be with Christ, the most entire detachment from all that was to be left behind: and afterwards, when life and health returned, those desires after heaven have not perceptibly remained; as if God for his own purpose had given and withdrawn them. I do not think the absence of such heavenward aspirings should give uneasiness to a Christian spirit, seeing how obviously it does consist with a state of salvation and a settled faith. But it should be an occasion of self-examination, to satisfy ourselves that it does not arise from secret unbelief, or from deficient love to Him whose presence in glory we are in such little haste to share. For should the cause of our reluctance be in this, the actual approach of dissolution will come

fraught with aggravated fears and bitter conflicts: whereas, if it be otherwise, nearer approach will dissipate the shades that are about it, and we shall joyfully welcome, when it comes, what at a distance we know not how to wish for.

Still—for, after all is said, it must be so—he is most entirely of the mind of Christ, who looks forward with intensest earnestness to the day of admission to his Father's house—never thinks but with gladness of that triumphant moment when the conflict with sin and Satan shall be ended—when the ultimate purposes of existence shall be attained—when God's glory shall be perfected in him, and his effaced likeness quite restored; who contemplates no moment of his life so blessed as that in which it shall be said—he dies.

THE END.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY JOHN STRANGEWAYS,
Castle St. Leicester Sq.